



US011732908B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Woods et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 11,732,908 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Aug. 22, 2023**

(54) **INTEGRATED DESICCANT-BASED COOLING AND DEHUMIDIFICATION**

(71) Applicant: **Alliance for Sustainable Energy, LLC**, Golden, CO (US)

(72) Inventors: **Jason David Woods**, Boulder, CO (US); **Eric Kozubal**, Superior, CO (US)

(73) Assignee: **Alliance for Sustainable Energy, LLC**, Golden, CO (US)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **18/085,950**

(22) Filed: **Dec. 21, 2022**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2023/0135067 A1 May 4, 2023

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 17/688,293, filed on Mar. 7, 2022, which is a continuation of application No. 16/898,227, filed on Jun. 10, 2020, now Pat. No. 11,326,790.

(60) Provisional application No. 62/859,432, filed on Jun. 10, 2019.

(51) **Int. Cl.**
F24F 3/14 (2006.01)
F24F 13/30 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **F24F 3/1417** (2013.01); **F24F 13/30** (2013.01); **F24F 2003/1435** (2013.01); **F24F 2003/1458** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC F24F 3/1417; F24F 2003/1435; F24F 2003/1458; F24F 13/30

See application file for complete search history.

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

3,777,456	A	12/1973	Lund
4,832,115	A	5/1989	Albers et al.
6,684,648	B2	2/2004	Faqih
8,252,092	B2	8/2012	Govindan et al.
11,326,790	B2	5/2022	Woods et al.
2013/0340449	A1	12/2013	Kozubal et al.
2016/0228820	A1	8/2016	Hayes et al.
2020/0164312	A1*	5/2020	Beh F24F 3/1417
2022/0196263	A1	6/2022	Woods et al.

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

EP	3 183 051	A1	6/2017
WO	2012/042553	A1	4/2012
WO	2016/026042	A1	2/2016

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

International Search Report and Written Opinion for PCT application No. PCT/US20/37044, dated Sep. 16, 2020, pp. 1-10.
Extended European Search Report for European application No. 20822712.4, dated Jan. 9, 2023, pp. 1-14.

(Continued)

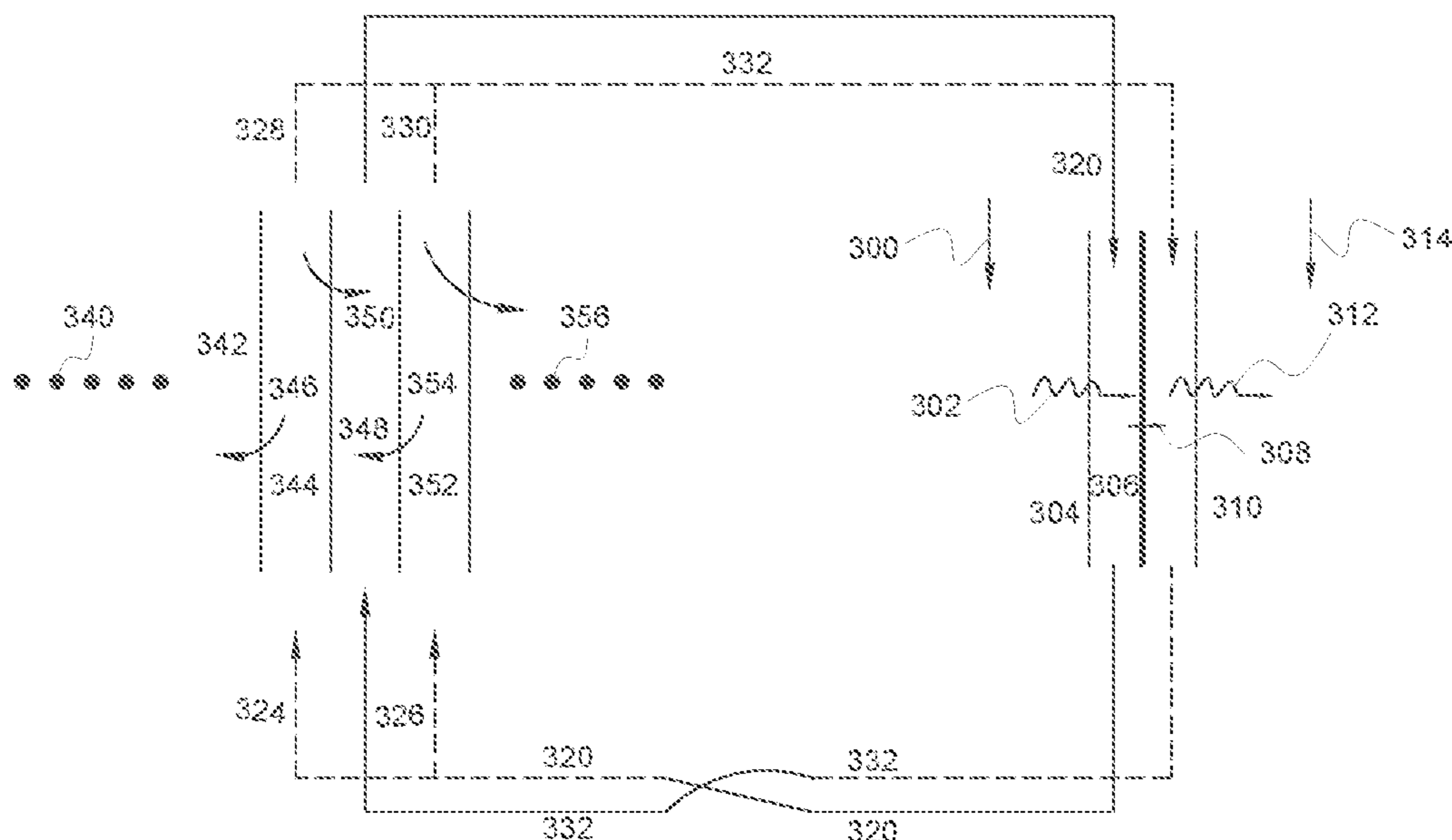
Primary Examiner — Elizabeth J Martin

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Alexandra M. Hall

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Integrated systems comprising both i) heat and mass exchange systems and ii) electrolysis stacks are disclosed, together with related methods of use. The disclosed systems cool and/or dehumidify air using two streams of salt solutions as liquid desiccants.

9 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets



(56)

References Cited

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Jiang, "Separation of water out of highly concentrated electrolyte solutions using multistage vacuum membrane distillation", Master of Science Thesis—KTH School of Industrial Engineering and Management, Energy Technology Stockholm, Sep. 26, 2013, pp. 1-82.

Galama et al., "Seawater predesalination with electrodialysis", *Desalination*, 2014, vol. 342, pp. 61-69.

Jarimi et al., "Review of sustainable methods for atmospheric water harvesting", *International Journal of Low-Carbon Technologies*, May 2020, vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 253-276.

Zhou et al., "Atmospheric Water Harvesting: A Review of Material and Structural Designs", *ACS Materials Letters*, May 2020, vol. 2, No. 7, pp. 671-684.

* cited by examiner

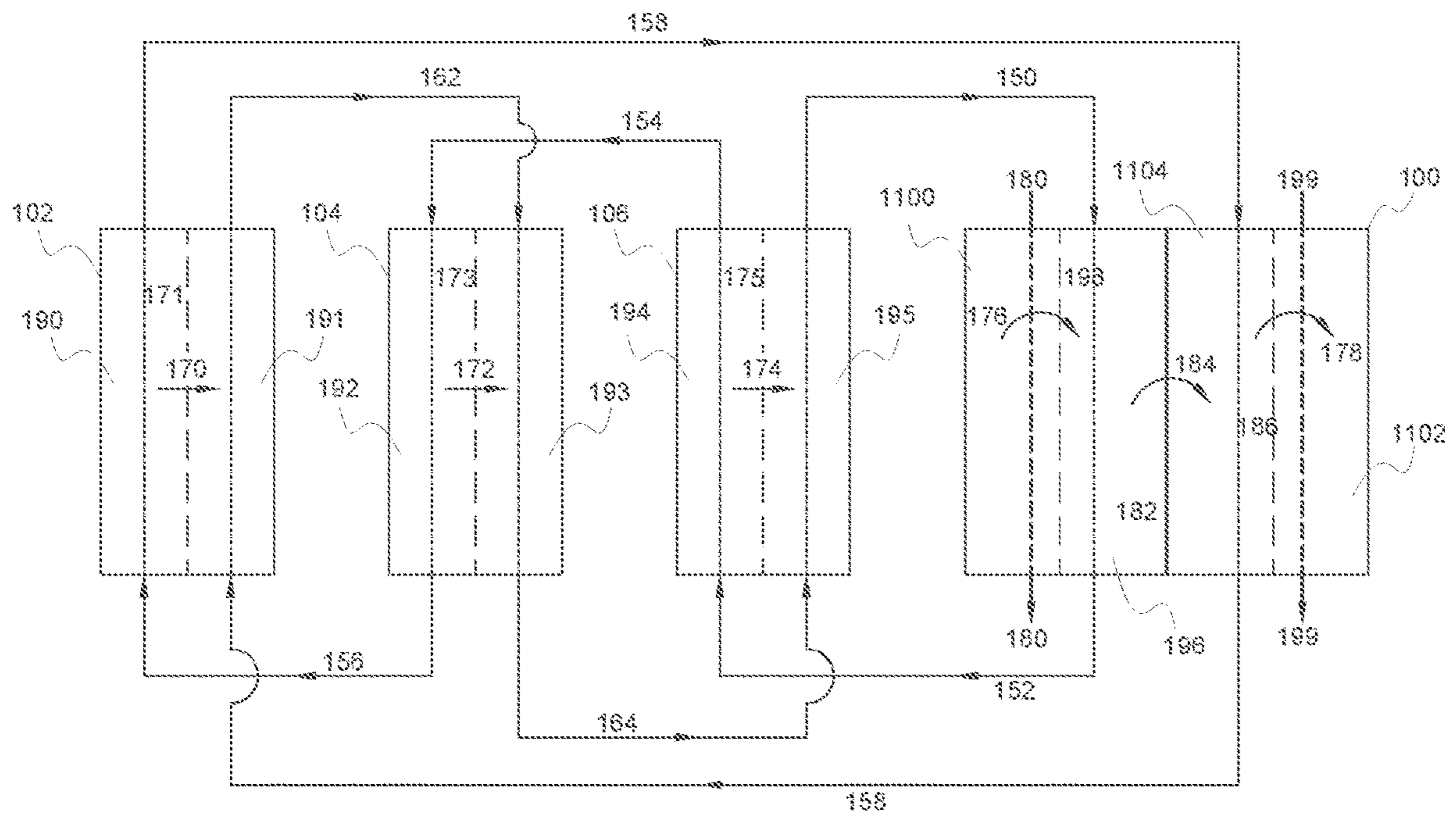


Figure 1

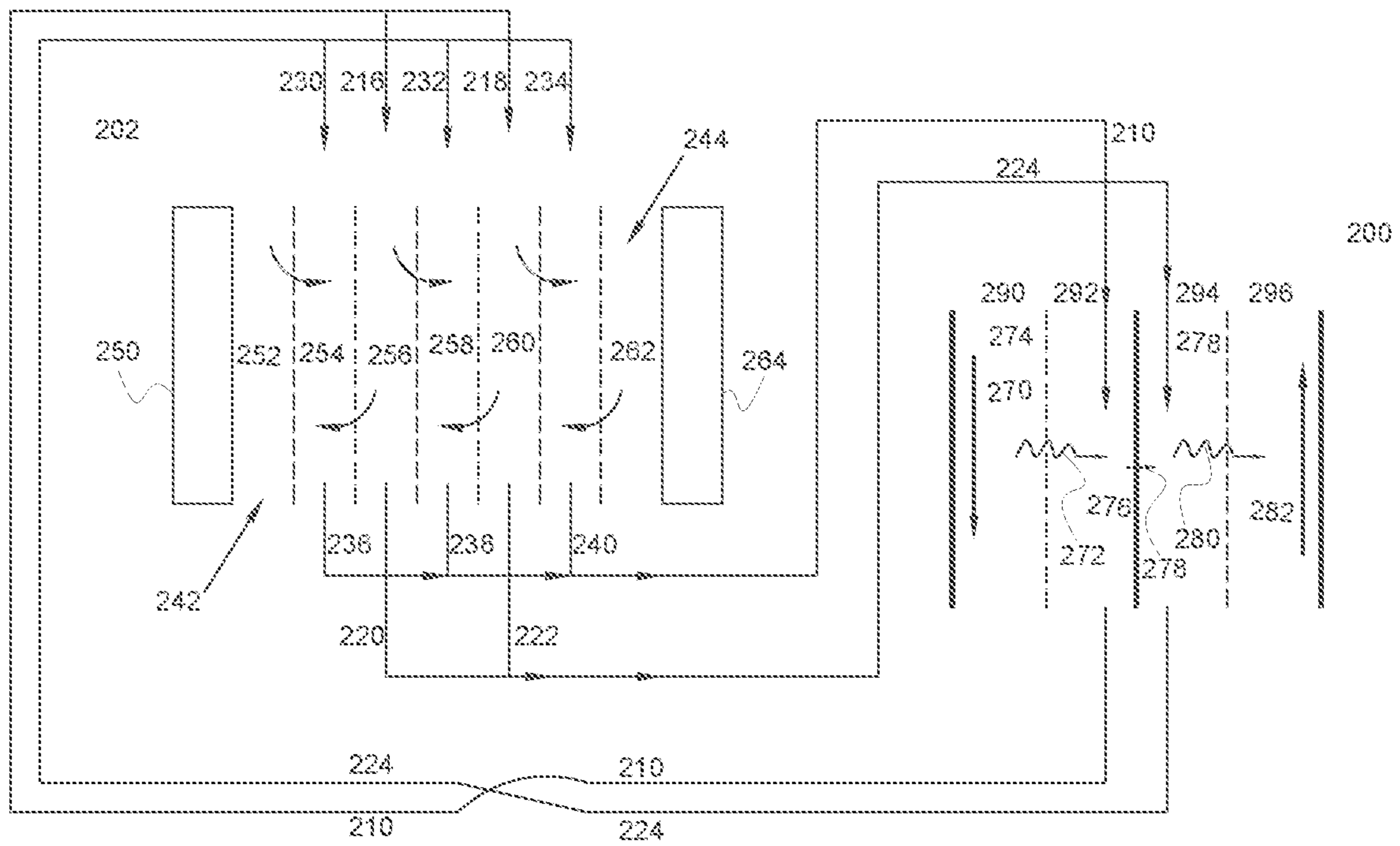


Figure 2

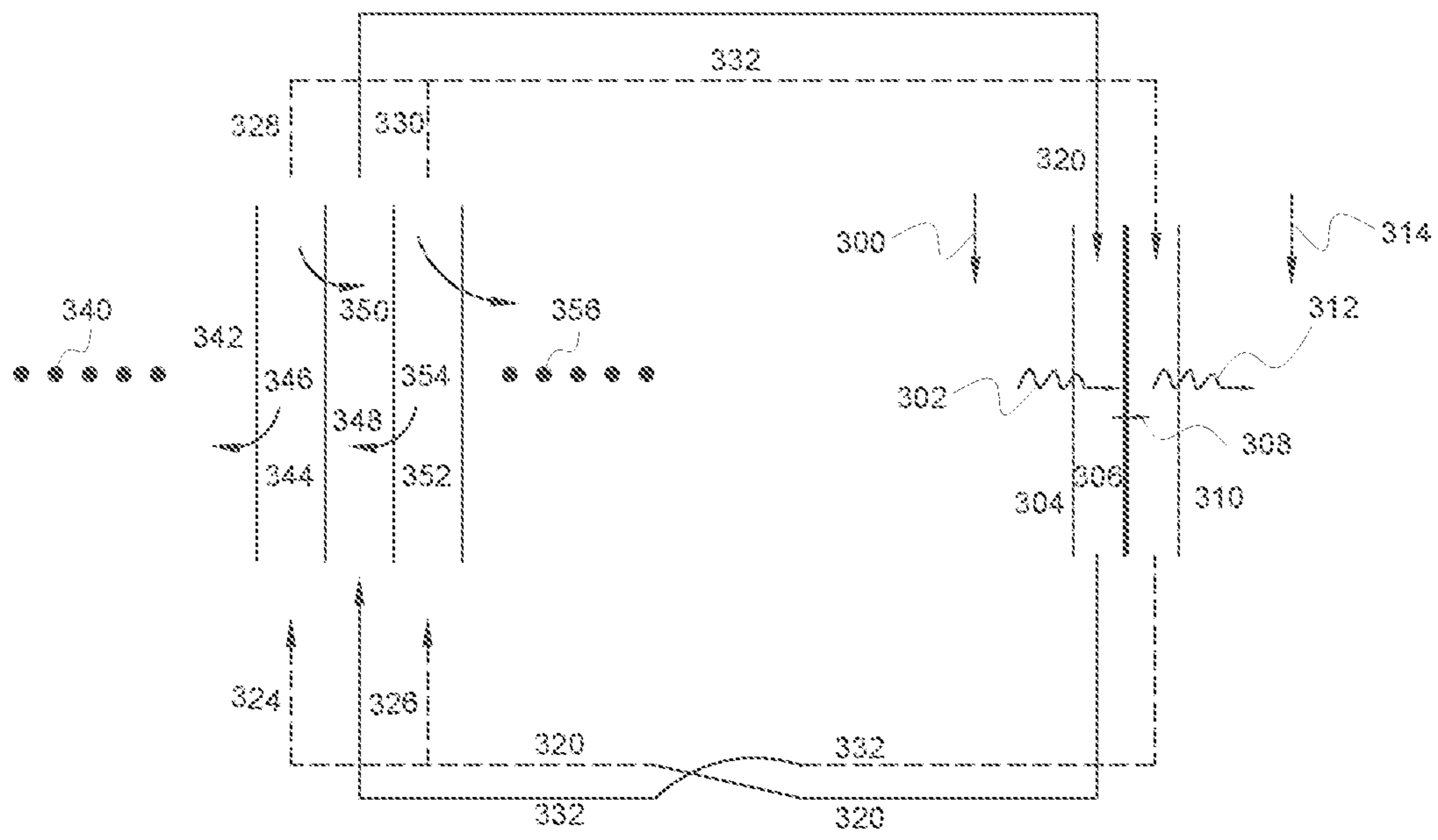


Figure 3

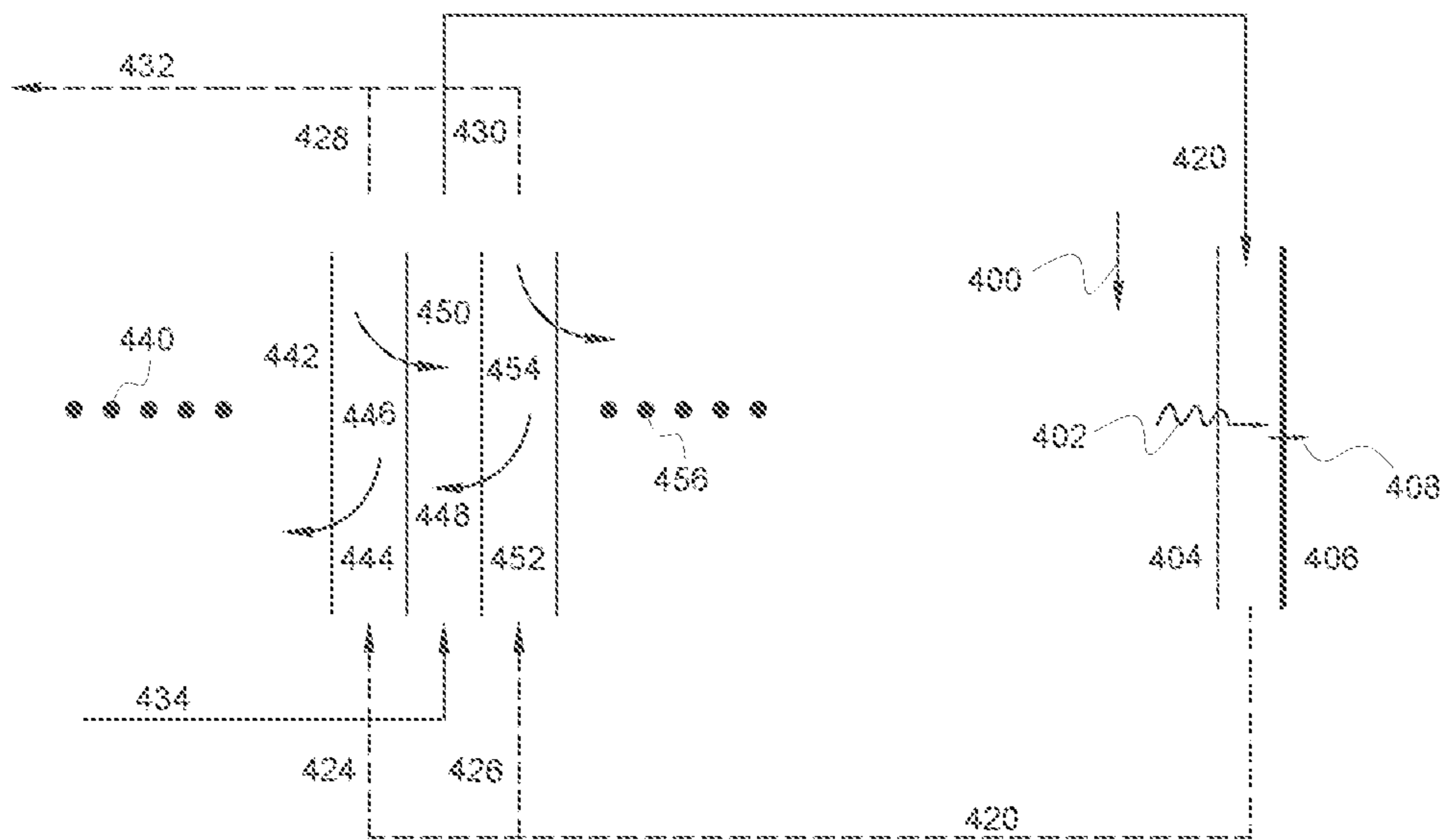


Figure 4

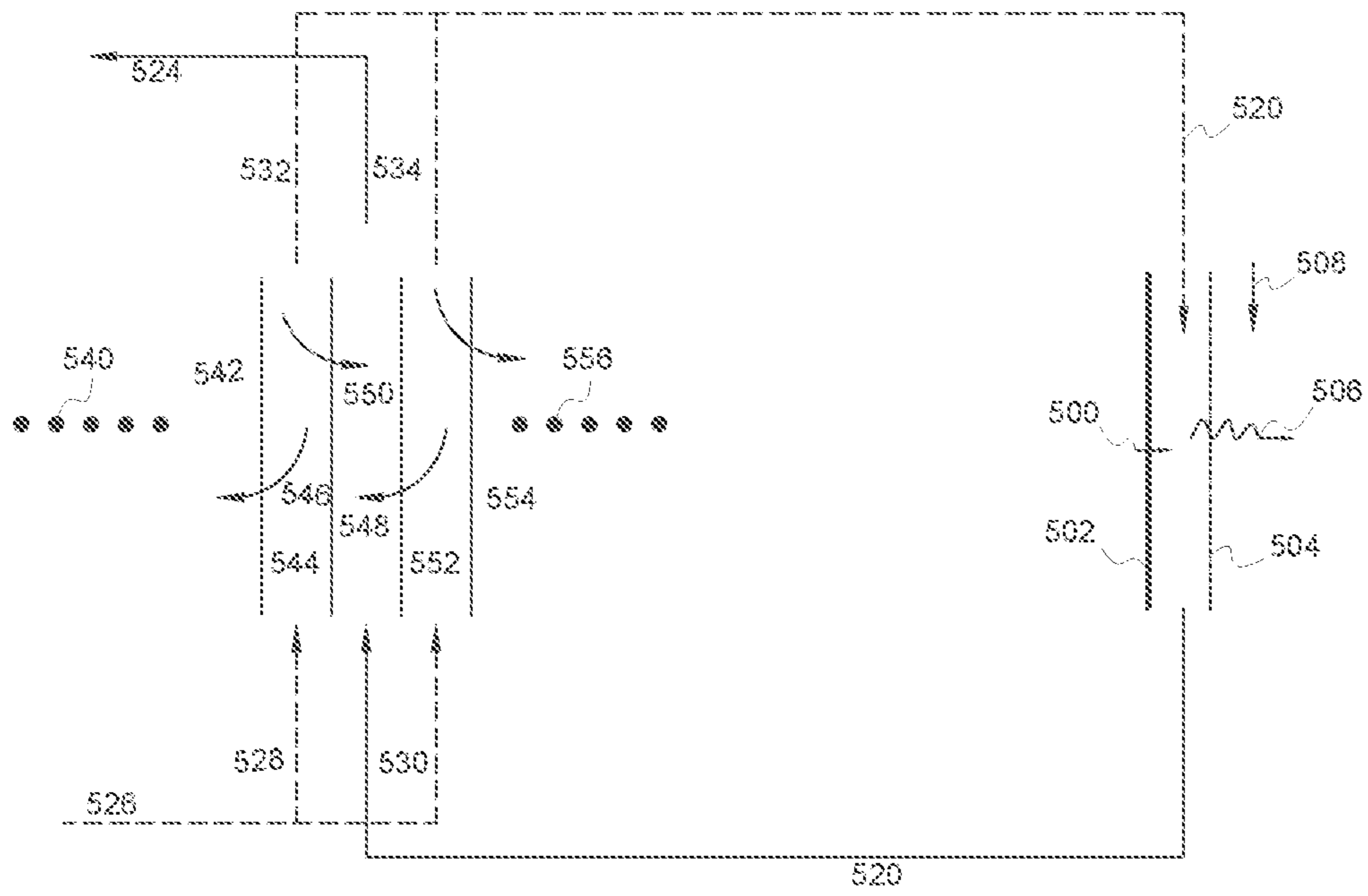


Figure 5

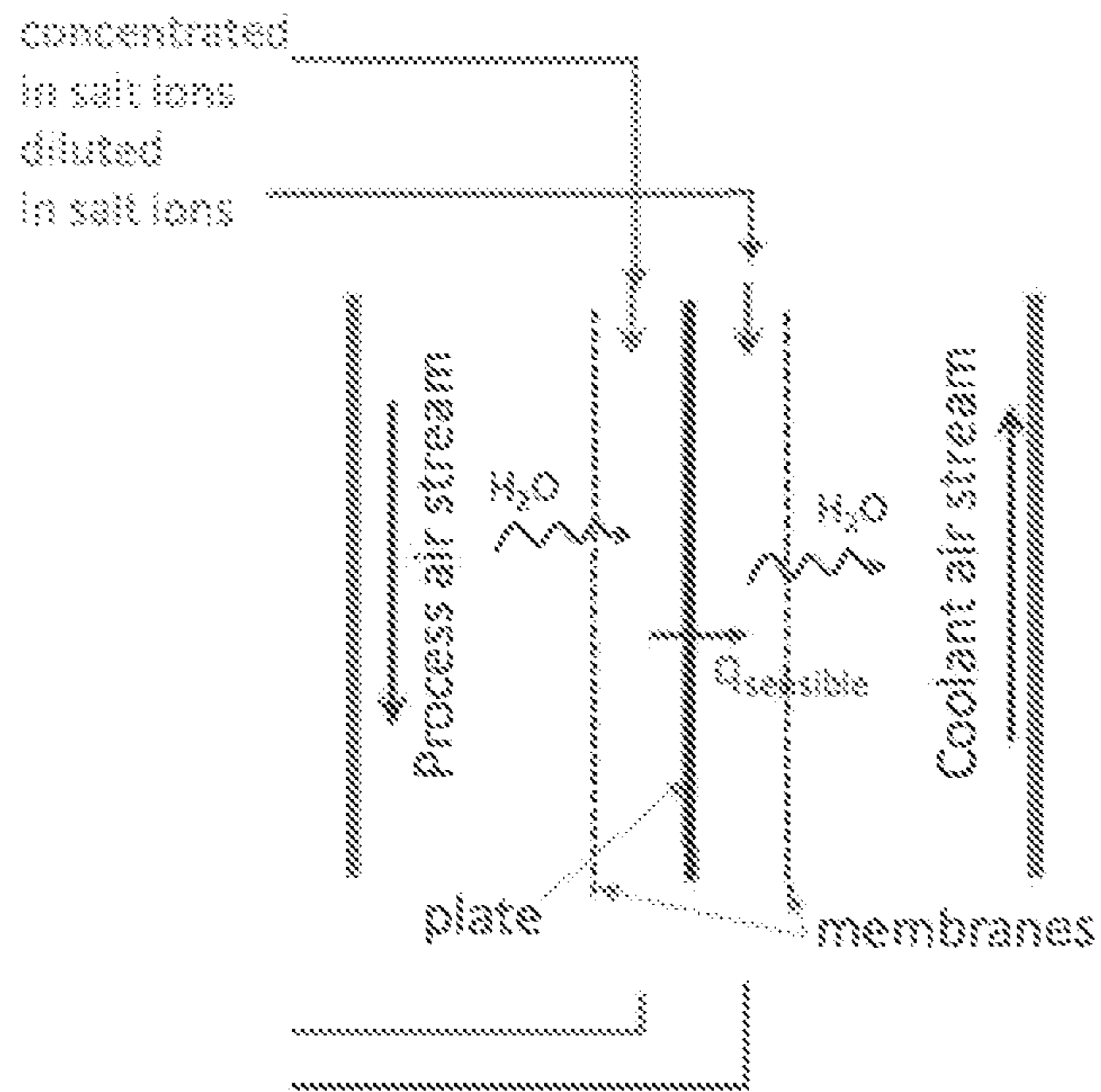


Figure 6

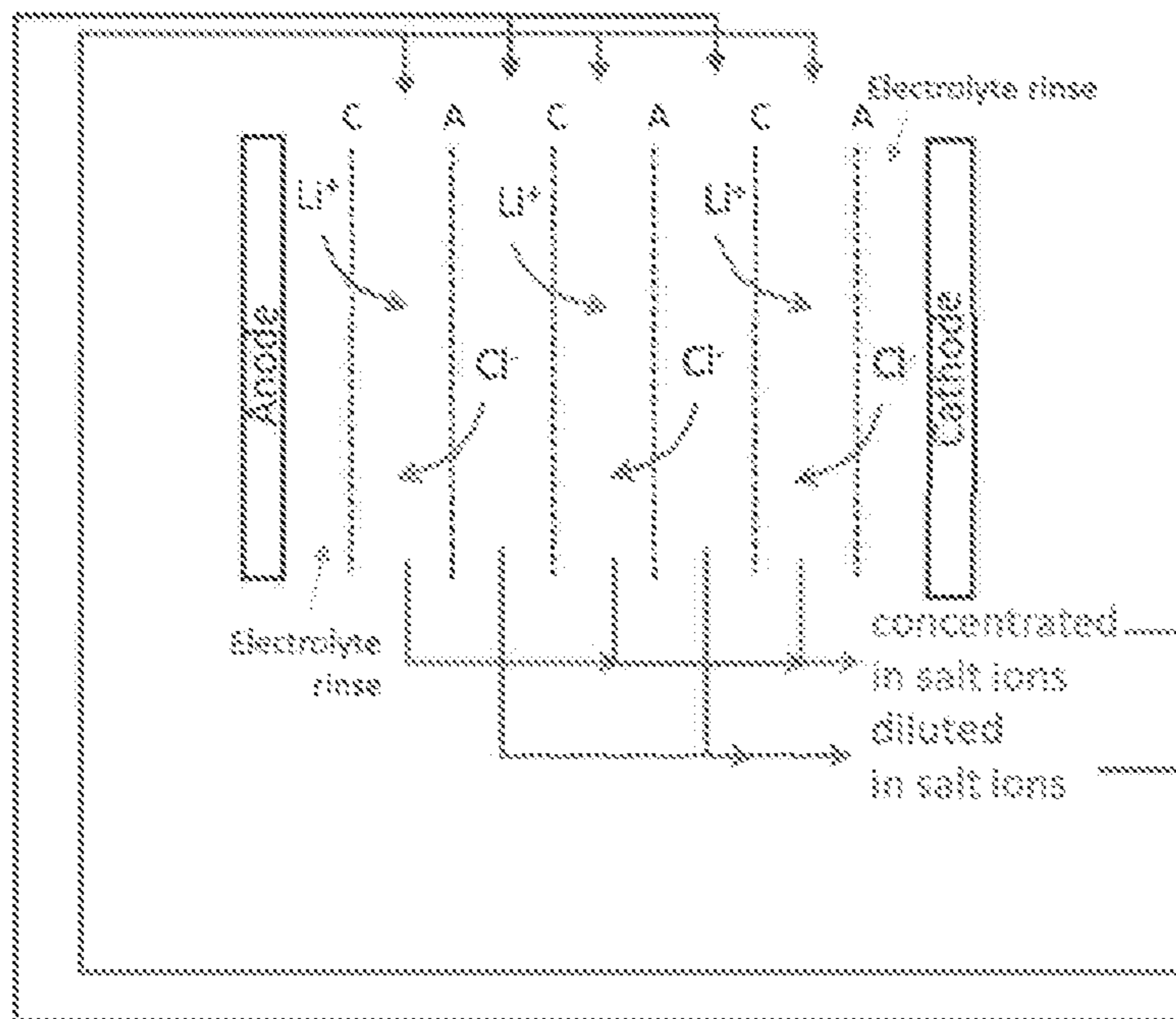


Figure 7

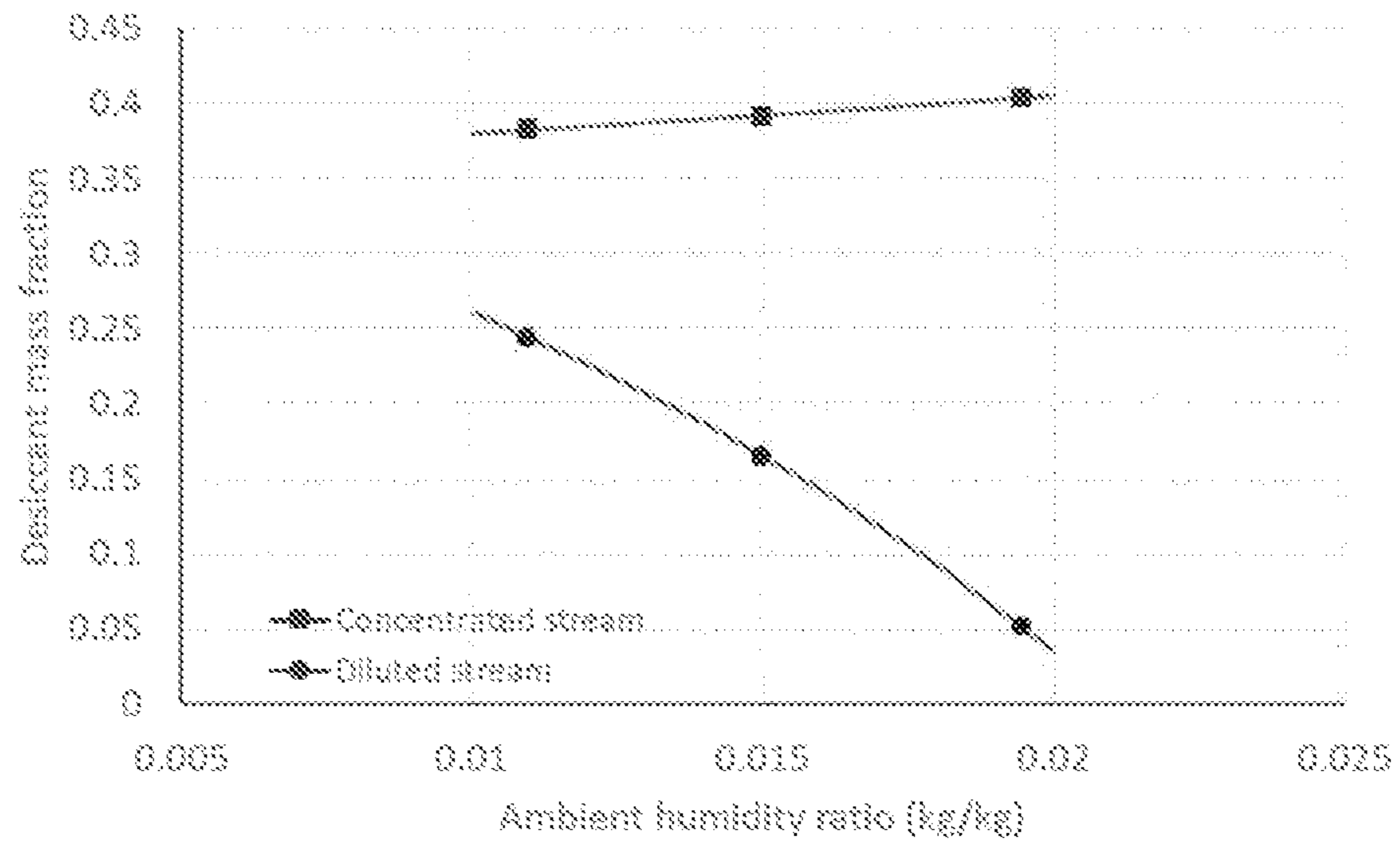


Figure 8

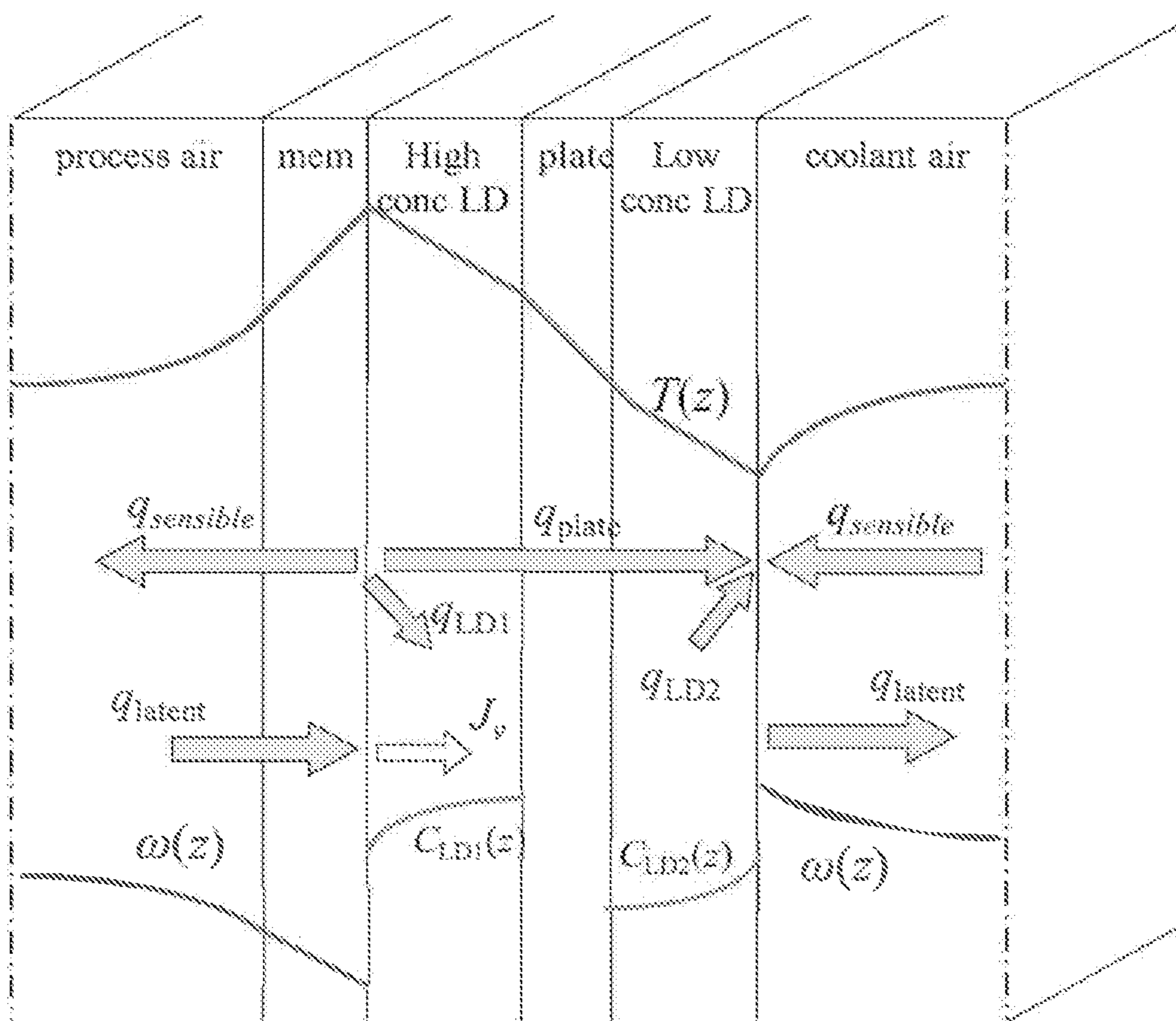


Figure 9

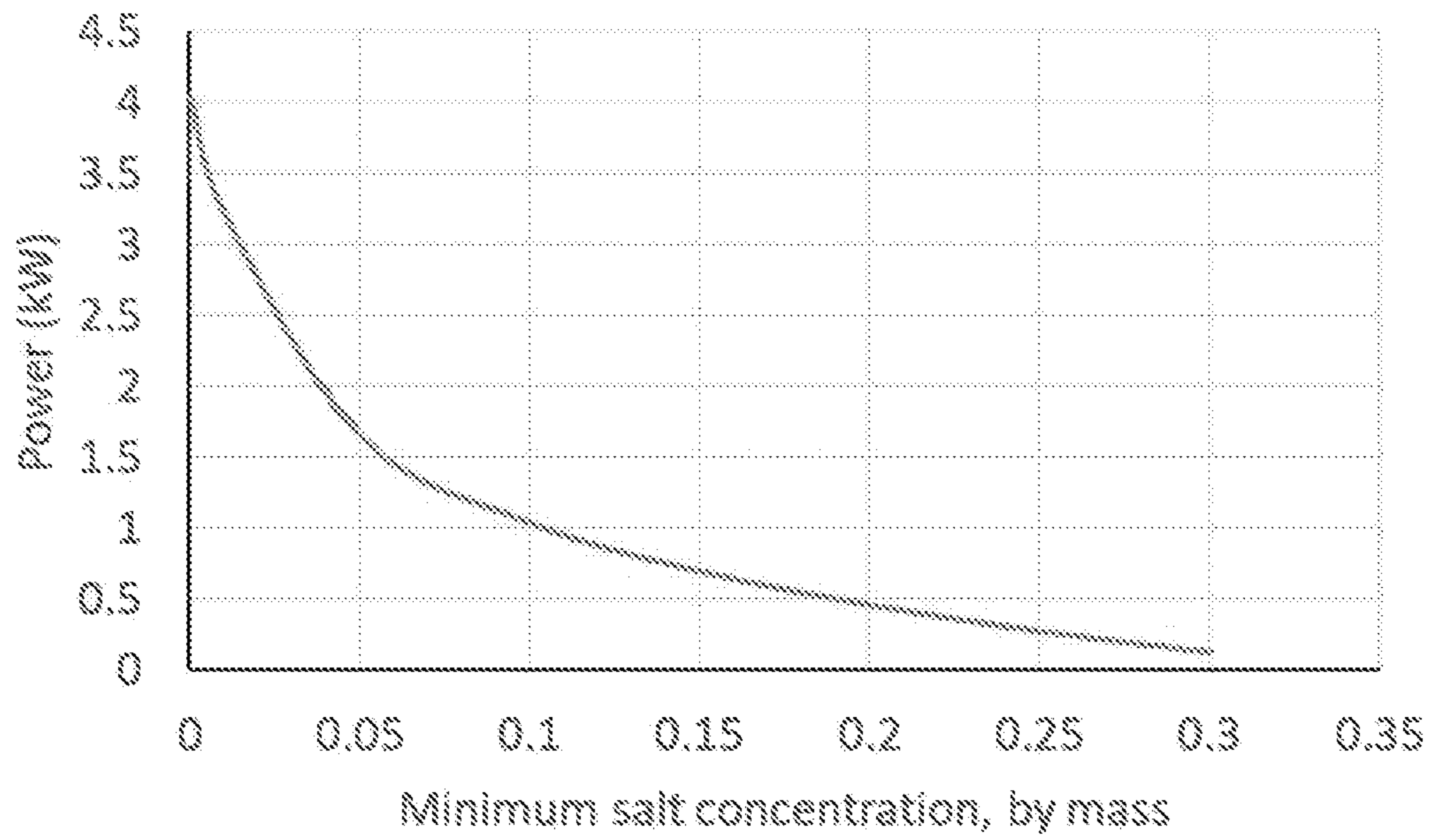


Figure 10

INTEGRATED DESICCANT-BASED COOLING AND DEHUMIDIFICATION

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. Nonprovisional patent application Ser. No. 17/688,293 filed Jun. 10, 2020, which is a continuation of U.S. Nonprovisional patent application Ser. No. 16/989,227 filed Mar. 7, 2022, which claims priority to U.S. Provisional patent application Ser. No. 62/859,432 filed Jun. 10, 2019 and U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/986,908 filed Mar. 9, 2020, each of which is incorporated herein in its entirety by reference.

CONTRACTUAL ORIGIN

The United States Government has rights in this invention under Contract No. DE-AC36-08GO28308 between the United States Department of Energy and Alliance for Sustainable Energy, LLC, the Manager and Operator of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

BACKGROUND

Air dehumidification is used around the world to provide comfortable and healthy indoor environments that are properly humidified. While being useful for conditioning supply air, conventional dehumidification systems are costly to operate as they use large amounts of energy (e.g., electricity). With the growing demand for energy, the cost of air dehumidification is expected to increase, and there is a growing demand for more efficient air dehumidification methods and technologies. Additionally, there are increasing demands for dehumidification technologies that do not use chemicals and materials, such as many conventional refrigerants, that may damage the environment if released or leaked. Maintenance is also a concern with many air dehumidification technologies, and, as a result, any new technology that is perceived as having increased maintenance requirements, especially for residential use, will be resisted by the marketplace.

State of the art vapor compression systems provide humidity control by first overcooling the air to remove humidity, and then reheating it to the desired temperature. This process is inefficient. Natural-gas-driven, open absorption systems offer an alternative, with better humidity control. But these are either inefficient (single-effect regeneration) or complex, expensive, and still require significant research (double-effect regeneration).

SUMMARY

Embodiments provided by the present disclosure can eliminate desiccant technologies' weaknesses by providing an all-electric option and eliminating water consumption by reclaiming water from the air.

In a first aspect, the present disclosure provides a dehumidification system, comprising: a heat and mass exchanger; at least one electro dialysis stack; a high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant; and a low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant, wherein the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant are in a single, continuous stream that connects the heat and mass exchanger and the at least one electro dialysis stack.

In some embodiments, the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant absorbs water from a process air stream in

the heat and mass exchanger and rejects salt ions to the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in the at least one electro dialysis stack.

In some embodiments, the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant desorbs water from a purge air stream in the heat and mass exchanger and accepts ions from the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in the at least one electro dialysis stack.

In some embodiments, the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant comprise the same salt solution.

In some embodiments, the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant comprise a salt solution selected from sodium chloride, potassium chloride, potassium iodide, lithium chloride, copper(II) chloride, silver chloride, calcium chloride, chlorine fluoride, bromomethane, iodoform, hydrogen chloride, lithium bromide, hydrogen bromide, potassium acetate, 1-Ethyl-3-methylimidazolium acetate, and combinations thereof.

In some embodiments, the salt solution is selected from lithium chloride and calcium chloride.

In some embodiments, the salt solution is lithium chloride.

In some embodiments, upon entry into the heat and mass exchanger, the difference in salt ion concentration between the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant is 20% by weight (wt %).

In some embodiments, upon entry into the at least one electro dialysis stack, the difference in salt ion concentration between the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant is 10 wt %.

In some embodiments, upon entry into the heat and mass exchanger, the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant has a salt ion concentration of 35 wt %.

In some embodiments, upon entry into the heat and mass exchanger, the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant has a salt ion concentration of 15 wt %.

In some embodiments, in the at least one electro dialysis stack, the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant is converted into the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant, and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant is converted into the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant.

In some embodiments, the system comprises two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen or twenty electro dialysis stacks arranged in series between a cathode and an anode.

In a second aspect, the present disclosure provides a method of dehumidifying air, comprising: absorbing water from a process air stream into a high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in a heat and mass exchanger, dehumidifying the process air stream; desorbing water from a low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant into a purge air stream in the heat and mass exchanger; moving the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant to at least one electro dialysis stack; rejecting salt ions from the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant to the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in the at least one electro dialysis stack, converting the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant into the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant; and accepting ions from the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant into the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in the at least one electro dialysis stack, converting the low salt ion concentration

liquid desiccant into the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant; wherein: the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant flow in a single, continuous stream that connects the heat and mass exchanger and the at least one electro dialysis stack; and the converted high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the converted low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant are moved to the mass and heat exchanger.

In some embodiments, the method further comprises purging heat from the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant into the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in the heat and mass exchanger, cooling the dehumidified process air stream.

In some embodiments, the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant comprise the same salt solution selected from sodium chloride, potassium chloride, potassium iodide, lithium chloride, copper(II) chloride, silver chloride, calcium chloride, chlorine fluoride, bromomethane, iodoform, hydrogen chloride, lithium bromide, hydrogen bromide, potassium acetate, 1-Ethyl-3-methylimidazolium acetate, and combinations thereof.

In some embodiments, the salt solution is selected from lithium chloride and calcium chloride.

In some embodiments, the salt solution is lithium chloride.

In some embodiments, when absorbing water from a process air stream into a high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and desorbing water from a low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant, the difference in salt ion concentration between the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant is 20% by weight (wt %).

In some embodiments, when initiating the rejection of salt ions from the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant to the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in the at least one electro dialysis stack, and when initiating the acceptance of ions from the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant into the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in the at least one electro dialysis stack, the difference in salt ion concentration between the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant is 10 wt %.

In some embodiments, when absorbing water from the process air stream, the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant has a salt ion concentration of 35 wt %.

In some embodiments, when desorbing water into the purge air stream, the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant has a salt ion concentration of 15 wt %.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Exemplary embodiments are illustrated in the referenced figures of the drawings. It is intended that the embodiments and figures disclosed herein are to be considered illustrative rather than limiting.

FIG. 1 illustrates, in schematic form, a cooling and dehumidification system provided by embodiments of the present disclosure. The depicted embodiment comprises an integrated system of a single heat and mass exchanger **100** and three electro dialysis stacks **102**, **104** and **106**.

FIG. 2 illustrates, in schematic form, another cooling and dehumidification system provided by embodiments of the present disclosure. The depicted embodiment comprises an integrated system of a single heat and mass exchanger **200** and a single electro dialysis stack **202**, wherein the electro dialysis

stack **202** contains a plurality of channels within a single stack where ion exchange may take place.

FIG. 3 illustrates, in schematic form, yet another cooling and dehumidification system provided by embodiments of the present disclosure. The embodiment depicted represents a general configuration of an integrated, continuous system comprising both a heat and mass exchanger and an electro dialysis stack.

FIG. 4 illustrates, in schematic form, portions of a dehumidification system that perform water absorption, which occurs in a heat and mass exchanger, and ion separation/desiccant concentration, which occurs in an electro dialysis stack.

FIG. 5 illustrates, in schematic form, portions of a dehumidification system that perform cooling, that occur in a heat and mass exchanger, and ion separation/desiccant dilution, which occur in an electro dialysis stack.

FIG. 6 illustrates, in schematic form, a generalized heat and mass exchanger, demonstrating the flow of fluid simultaneously into a high salt solution concentration desiccant and out of a low salt solution concentration desiccant.

FIG. 7 illustrates, in schematic form, a generalized electro dialysis stack.

FIG. 8 shows concentrations of desiccant streams when using the absorber shown in the heat and mass exchanger of FIG. 6, for a range of ambient air humidity. The figure shows high efficiency dehumidification even when the concentration difference between the two liquid desiccant streams is small.

FIG. 9 illustrates heat transfer flows between different fluids of the model described in Example 2. LD=liquid desiccant, ω =humidity ratio, q =heat transfer (sensible or latent), J_v =mass flux into desiccant.

FIG. 10 shows the estimate electrical input to concentrate a desiccant stream to 35%, for the minimum concentration of the dilute stream.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The following embodiments and aspects thereof are described and illustrated in conjunction with systems, tools and methods that are meant to be exemplary and illustrative, not limiting in scope. In various embodiments, one or more of the above-described problems have been reduced or eliminated, while other embodiments are directed to other improvements.

The phrases “inlet supply air,” “inlet supply airstream,” “process air,” and “process air stream” are used interchangeably herein. All refer to an airstream that is to be cooled and dehumidified by the systems and methods provided by the present disclosure.

The present disclosure provides systems and methods for the dehumidification and conditioning of air. This involves the use of liquid desiccants that flow through the systems in a closed loop, through a single, integrated system comprising one or more heat and mass exchangers and one or more electro dialysis stacks. The heat and mass exchangers transfer heat and humidity from process air (to be dehumidified) into a liquid desiccant stream that is high in salt ion concentration (i.e., a high concentration liquid desiccant stream). The transferred heat is then moved from the high concentration desiccant stream into a liquid desiccant stream that is low in salt ion concentration (i.e., a low concentration liquid desiccant stream). Thereafter, heat and humidity are moved from the low salt ion concentration desiccant stream into an exhaust air stream, which is purged from the system. In doing so, the heat and mass exchangers remove the

5

process air from a space, for example a room in a building (home, office or otherwise), move the process air through the heat and mass exchangers where it is dehumidified and cooled, and then reintroduce that process air into the space from which it was removed. The end result being reintroduction of dehumidified and cooled air into the space from which it was originally removed. Removal of water from the process air dilutes the ion concentration of the high concentration liquid desiccant stream by adding water to it. Likewise, removal of water from the low concentration desiccant stream into the exhaust air concentrates the ions in the low concentration stream. In order to volumetrically reconstitute those desiccant streams, after the process air is dehumidified and cooled, the high concentration liquid desiccant stream and low concentration liquid desiccant stream are moved from a heat and mass exchanger to one or more electro-dialysis stacks where the high concentration liquid desiccant stream is converted into the low concentration liquid desiccant stream and, likewise, the low concentration liquid desiccant stream is converted into the high concentration liquid desiccant stream, before being returned to the heat and mass exchanger for further dehumidification of air.

The systems provided by the present disclosure therefore comprise integrated functionality between one or more heat and mass exchangers and one or more electro-dialysis stacks. The disclosed systems serve to dehumidify and/or cool a process air flow in order to maintain environmental comfort in an enclosed space. Unlike other such systems known in the art, such as liquid desiccant air conditioning units, no heating steps are required in the embodiments provided by the present disclosure. Such steps can be expensive and require significant energy input, depending on the temperature and humidity of the process air flow. Given that, it is anticipated that the new systems and methods disclosed herein will provide significant cost and energy savings for both manufacturers and consumers.

Dehumidification of process air is achieved via the use of one or more mass and heat exchangers (or transfer assemblies) as indirect evaporative coolers and/or heat exchangers. Each mass and heat exchanger is formed of alternating stacks, each, in some embodiments, including a first (or upper) layer or sheet of membrane material, a separation wall, and a second (or lower) layer or sheet of membrane material. The upper and lower membranes are permeable to water molecules in the vapor state while the separation wall is impermeable to water but allows heat transfer (i.e., is a thin layer and/or is made of materials that conduct heat). In each mass and heat exchanger, a high concentration liquid desiccant flows between the first membrane layer and the separation wall and a low concentration liquid desiccant flows between the separation wall and the second membrane layer. In some embodiments, when one or more mass and heat exchangers are used in tandem, the flow order of the air streams is reversed, such that they are flowing in opposite directions to each other. When more than two mass and heat exchangers are used in tandem, this reversal of flow ordering is repeated to form alternating supply and exhaust air flow channels or chambers. Process air (or air to be dehumidified and cooled) is directed through a first channel along a first side of the first water permeable membrane while a portion of the pre-cooled exhaust air (e.g., a fraction of the process air that has already been dehumidified and cooled by previous flow through one or more mass and heat exchanger(s)) is directed through a second channel along a second side of a second water permeable membrane, typically in a counterflow arrangement relative to the flow of the incoming process air. Thus, the high concentration liquid desiccant

6

flow is on the other side of the first water permeable membrane from the process air, while the low concentration liquid desiccant flow is on the other side of the second water permeable membrane from the exhaust airflow (i.e., the fraction of previously processed air directed to be exhausted). As noted above, the flow of the exhaust, or purge, air can be counter to that of the process air flow, or in the same direction, depending on the desired arrangement of mass and heat exchangers, as follows:

10 First Chamber:

→Process air intake→

First water permeable membrane

→High ion concentration liquid desiccant→

Water impermeable, heat permeable plate

15 Second chamber:

→Low ion concentration fluid desiccant→

Second water permeable membrane

←Exhaust air←—or—→Exhaust air→

Such an arrangement can be seen in, for example, FIG. 2. In various embodiments, the supply air inlet airflow, supply outlet airflow, exhaust airflow, and both liquid desiccant flows are plumbed such as via one or more manifold assemblies into a heat and mass exchanger, which can be provided in a housing as a single unit such as, for example, an indirect evaporative cooler.

In several embodiments, dehumidification and evaporative cooling of the process air are accomplished by separation of the process air and the high concentration liquid desiccant by a water-permeable membrane. The membrane is formed of one or more substances or materials to be permeable to water molecules in the vapor state. The permeation of the water molecules through the membrane enables/is a driving force behind dehumidification and evaporative cooling of the process air stream. As described above, multiple air streams can be arranged to flow through the chambers of a single heat and mass exchanger such that a secondary (exhaust) air stream, which in several embodiments is an exhaust airflow of pre-cooled air, is humidified and absorbs enthalpy from the process air stream. The process air stream is cooled and simultaneously dehumidified by flowing a high concentration liquid desiccant along the opposite side of the water permeable membrane, allowing water to move across the membrane.

The same type of membrane is also used to separate the flow of a low concentration liquid desiccant from the exhaust airflow channel or chamber, such that the membrane separates the low concentration liquid desiccant from the exhaust air stream. Wicking materials/surfaces or other devices may be used to contain or control water flow (e.g., direct-contact wicking surfaces could be used in combination with the use of the liquid desiccant containment by a membrane), but membrane liquid control facilitates fabrication of the stacks or manifold structure useful for the heat and mass exchanger configurations disclosed herein that provide cooling and dehumidification of a process airflow. In such configurations, the air streams can be arranged in counter-flow, counter-flow with pre-cooled exhaust air, cross-flow, parallel flow, and impinging flow to perform desired simultaneous heat and mass exchange in a single evaporative cooling units containing more than one heat and mass exchanger.

The embodiments disclosed herein generally use one continuous stream of liquid desiccant, which can be described as a stream with portions of high and low salt concentration. The portions of the stream that are high in salt contain from about 20% to about 45% salt by weight. The portions of the stream that are low in salt concentration

contain from about 3% to about 30% salt by weight. The concentrations are controlled by the amount of water absorbed into the high concentration liquid desiccant stream which, in some embodiments, matches the water desorbed from the low concentration stream.

The salt ion concentration of the high concentration liquid desiccant can vary in order to influence the target humidity of the process air stream. As the desired level of humidity of the process air stream decreases, the salt ion concentration of the high concentration liquid desiccant can increase. Increasing the salt ion concentration of the high concentration liquid desiccant allows it to remove more water from the process air stream.

The salt ion concentration of the low concentration liquid desiccant can also vary in order to influence the target humidity and/or temperature of the process air stream. The low concentration liquid desiccant desorbs water into the exhaust, or purge, air stream which, in some embodiments, reflects the ambient environment. Lower ambient humidity will allow for higher concentrations in this low concentration desiccant, meaning it will still be able to desorb enough water to maintain the integrity of the disclosed systems. At ambient humidity, the concentration of the low concentration liquid desiccant can be reduced in order to maintain a rate of water desorption.

As a person skilled in the art will appreciate, the salt ion concentrations of both the low and high concentration liquid desiccants can also vary based on the salt solution used. Some salt solutions will serve to dehumidify a process air stream more efficiently than others, and those that are less efficient may require a higher salt ion concentration in order to achieve a target outlet humidity.

Some embodiments also include a second heat and mass exchanger, wherein the first heat and mass exchanger receives inlet process air from an airstream, for example from ambient air or air return from a building, and the second heat and mass exchanger receives as the exhaust or purge air a stream of process air that has been dehumidified. The dehumidified process air that serves as the exhaust or purge air for the second heat and mass exchanger is produced by and flows from the first heat and mass exchanger.

A separation wall, also referred to herein as a plate, separates the first and second chambers described above. The wall is formed from a material (such as plastic) that is impermeable to the high concentration and low concentration liquid desiccants but that conducts or allows heat removed from the process air supply to be moved to the low concentration liquid desiccant.

In various embodiments, the low concentration liquid desiccant and high concentration liquid desiccant comprise a halide salt solution. As described herein, the flow of the desiccant streams overlap, or move through the disclosed systems in a continuous quasi-figure-8 pattern, with the low concentration desiccant stream being processed to become the high concentration desiccant stream, and vice versa. Because of that, both desiccant streams are made of the same solution, often a halide salt solution, with the difference between the two being the concentration of ions in the particular desiccant flow stream. The desiccant solution can be a halide salt can be selected from sodium chloride (NaCl), potassium chloride (KCl), potassium iodide (KI), lithium chloride (LiCl), copper(II) chloride (CuCl₂), silver chloride (AgCl), calcium chloride (CaCl₂), chlorine fluoride (ClF), bromomethane (CH₃Br), iodoform (CHI₃), hydrogen chloride (HCl), lithium bromide (LiBr), hydrogen bromide (HBr), and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the halide salt solution is selected from LiCl and CaCl₂. In some

embodiments, the halide salt solution is LiCl. The desiccant can also be potassium acetate or 1-Ethyl-3-methylimidazolium acetate (CAS number 143314-17-4).

The disclosed systems are integrated systems comprising both i) one or more heat and mass exchangers and ii) one or more electrolysis stacks. As stated briefly above, and in detail below, water is removed from the process air stream. This provides two advantages to the disclosed systems. First, the process air is dehumidified before it is returned to an enclosed space, helping to effect climate control in that enclosed space. Second, the water removed from the process air stream is moved directly into the high concentration desiccant stream. In contrast, water is removed from the low concentration desiccant stream into the exhaust or purge air stream, which is then removed from the system. The flow of the desiccant streams overlap, or operate in a quasi-figure-8 pattern, with the low concentration desiccant stream being processed via electrolysis to become the high concentration desiccant stream, and vice versa. By bringing water into the disclosed systems via the high concentration desiccant stream, the disclosed systems reclaim water from the air for use in cooling and dehumidifying more process air. Doing so allows the systems to utilize less water from municipal sources, easing environmental impacts.

The inventors have surprisingly determined that an integrated system comprising both i) heat and mass exchange systems and ii) electrolysis stacks, can be operated to cool and dehumidify air with great efficiency using two streams of salt solutions as liquid desiccants. In the heat and mass exchange systems, the concentration difference between the high concentration liquid desiccant and the low concentration liquid desiccant can be as much as 20 wt % wherein, in some embodiments, the high concentration liquid desiccant entering the heat and mass exchanger has a salt ion concentration of about 35 wt % and the low concentration liquid desiccant entering the heat and mass exchanger has a salt ion concentration of about 15 wt %. A desiccant stream of pure water is not used.

Electrodialysis has not been explored previously between high concentration (about 35 wt %) and low concentration (about 15 wt %) fluid desiccants; the present disclosure provides systems utilizing fluid desiccant streams having these concentrations. Namely, the present disclosure provides systems comprising i) a heat and mass exchange system whereby high concentration and low concentration fluid desiccants are used to dehumidify and/or cool air, and ii) an electrodialysis system that transfers ions from the spent high concentration liquid desiccant leaving the exchanger into the spent low concentration liquid desiccant, effectively converting one fluid flow to the other. This is achieved using multi-stage electrochemical deionization systems, which lower the concentration gradients across the membrane by distributing this gradient across several ion transport stages. The use of two streams of the same halide salt solution at differing ion concentrations as liquid desiccants has not been disclosed in the literature in an integrated system such as those disclosed herein.

In addition to the exemplary aspects and embodiments described above, further aspects and embodiments will become apparent by reference to the drawings and by study of the following descriptions.

In a first embodiment, the present disclosure provides the system for dehumidifying a process air removed from and then resupplied to a space depicted in FIG. 1. The system is a single, integrated system comprising a heat and mass exchanger **100** directly coupled to multiple electrodialysis stacks (**102**, **104**, **106**). The heat and mass exchanger **100**

contains: a first flow channel **1100** for through which a stream of inlet supply air **180** flows; a second flow channel **196** adjacent to the first flow channel **1100**, for receiving and outputting a high concentration liquid desiccant **150**; a third flow channel **1104** adjacent to the second flow channel **196** for receiving and outputting a low concentration liquid desiccant **158**; and a fourth flow channel **1102** adjacent to the third flow channel **1104** through which a stream of exhaust air **199** flows. The first and second flow channels are defined in part by a first vapor permeable membrane **198** that separates the first and second flow channels, wherein humidity (water vapor) **176** moves across the first vapor permeable membrane **198** from the stream of inlet supply air **180** to the high concentration liquid desiccant **150**. The third and fourth flow channels are defined in part by a second vapor permeable membrane **186** that separates the third and fourth flow channels. Humidity **178** flows across the second vapor permeable membrane **186** from the low concentration liquid desiccant **158** to the stream of exhaust air **199**. The second and third flow channels are defined in part by a separation wall **182** that separates the second **196** and third **1104** flow channels. The separation wall **182** allows transfer heat **184** to be transferred from the second flow channel **196** to the third flow channel **1104**.

In this embodiment, the high concentration liquid desiccant **150** enters the second flow channel **196** with a salt ion concentration of about 35 wt %, and the low concentration liquid desiccant **158** enters the third channel **1104** with a salt ion concentration of about 15 wt %—a difference of about 20 wt % in salt ion concentration. It is at this point in the disclosed system where the salt ion concentration between the two desiccants is at its maximal point. As the two desiccants move through the heat and mass exchanger, the high concentration liquid desiccant **150**, having gained water from the inlet supply air **180**, has its salt concentration drop from 35 wt % to 30 wt %; it is at 30 wt % concentration when it is moved from the heat and mass exchanger to the third electrolysis stack **106**. Additionally, the low concentration liquid desiccant **158** loses water to the exhaust air **199**, causing its salt concentration to increase from 15 wt % to 20 wt % when it is moved to the first electrolysis stack **102**.

The embodiment depicted in FIG. 1 also comprises three electro dialysis stacks **102**, **104**, **106**. The first electro dialysis stack **102** includes a first electro dialysis flow channel **190** defined in part by a first cation permeable membrane **171**, into which a second stream of intermediate low concentration liquid desiccant **156**, having a salt concentration of 20 wt %, flows and out of which the first stream of low concentration liquid desiccant **158**, having a salt concentration of 15 wt %, flows, the desiccant **156** having lost 5 wt % of its salt ions during electrolysis in the first stack **102**. The first electro dialysis stack **102** also includes a second electro dialysis flow channel **191** defined in part by the first cation permeable membrane **171**, into which the low concentration liquid desiccant **158**, having just left the heat and mass exchanger with an ion concentration of 20 wt %, flows and out of which a first stream of intermediate high concentration liquid desiccant **162**, having a salt concentration of 25 wt %, flows, the desiccant **158** having gained 5 wt % of salt ions during electrolysis in the first stack **102**. Cations **170** flow from the low concentration liquid desiccant **158** across the first cation permeable membrane **171** into the second stream of intermediate low concentration liquid desiccant **156**. The cation content of the low concentration liquid desiccant **158** increases, or becomes more concentrated, by addition of cations **170**, thereby producing a first

stream of intermediate high concentration liquid desiccant **162**. The cation concentration of the second stream of intermediate low concentration liquid desiccant **156** decreases, or becomes more dilute, by removal of cations **170**, thereby regenerating the low concentration liquid desiccant **158**.

The second electro dialysis stack **104** includes a third electro dialysis flow channel **192** defined in part by a second cation permeable membrane **173**, into which a first stream of intermediate low concentration liquid desiccant **154**, having a salt ion concentration of 25 wt %, flows and out of which the second stream of intermediate low concentration liquid desiccant **156**, having a salt ion concentration of 20 wt %, flows, the desiccant **154** having lost 5 wt % of its salt ions during electrolysis in the second stack **104**. The second electro dialysis stack **104** also includes a fourth electro dialysis flow channel **193** defined in part by the second cation permeable membrane **173**, into which the first stream of intermediate high concentration liquid desiccant **162**, having a salt ion concentration of about 25 wt %, flows, and out of which a second stream of intermediate high concentration liquid desiccant **164**, having a salt ion concentration of 30 wt %, flows, the desiccant **162** having gained 5 wt % in salt ions during electrolysis in the second stack **104**. Cations **172** flow from the first stream of intermediate low concentration liquid desiccant **154** across the second cation permeable membrane **173** into the first stream of intermediate high concentration liquid desiccant **162**. The cation concentration of the first stream of intermediate low concentration liquid desiccant **154** is decreased, or diluted, by removal of the cations **172**, thereby producing the second stream of intermediate low concentration liquid desiccant **156**. The cation concentration of the first stream of intermediate high concentration liquid desiccant **162** is concentrated by the addition of the cations **172**, thereby producing the second stream of intermediate high concentration liquid desiccant **164**.

The third electro dialysis stack **106** includes a fifth electro dialysis flow channel **194** defined in part by a third cation permeable membrane **175**, into which the high concentration liquid desiccant **152**, having a salt ion concentration of 30 wt %, flows and out of which the first stream of intermediate low concentration liquid desiccant **154**, having a salt ion concentration of 25 wt %, flows, the desiccant **152** having lost 5 wt % of its salt ions during electrolysis in the third stack **106**. The third electro dialysis stack **106** also includes a sixth electro dialysis flow channel **195** defined in part by the third cation permeable membrane **175**, into which the second stream of intermediate high concentration liquid desiccant **164**, having a salt ion concentration of 30 wt %, flows and out of which the high concentration liquid desiccant **150**, having a salt ion concentration of 35 wt %, flows, the desiccant **164** having gained 5 wt % of salt ions during electrolysis in the third stack **106**. Cations **174** flow from the high concentration liquid desiccant **150** across the third cation permeable membrane **175** into the second stream of intermediate high concentration liquid desiccant **164**. The cation concentration of the high concentration liquid desiccant **150** is decreased, or diluted, by removal of cations **174** to produce the first stream of intermediate low concentration liquid desiccant **154**. The cation concentration of the second stream of intermediate high concentration liquid desiccant **164** is increased, or concentrated, by the addition of the cations **174** to regenerate the high concentration liquid desiccant **150**.

In each of the three electro dialysis stacks **102**, **104** and **106**, cations move across the cation permeable membranes **171**, **173**, **175** according to an electric field applied to each

of the three electro dialysis stacks **102**, **104**, **106**. Briefly, cations, which are positively charged, will move away from a cathode (not shown), or positively charged component of an electrochemical cell, toward a negatively charged component, or anode (not shown). In the embodiment depicted in FIG. 1, the cathode(s) would be located to the left of each of the of the three electro dialysis stacks **102**, **104**, **106**, causing the cations **170**, **172**, **174** to move away from it, across the cation permeable membranes **171**, **173**, **175**. The anode(s) would be located to the right of each of the three electro dialysis stacks **102**, **104**, **106**, causing the cations **170**, **172**, **174** to move toward it. Because the cation permeable membranes **171**, **173**, **175** are only permeable to cations, anions present in the salt solutions will not move. The net effect being that the desiccant streams **162**, **164** and **150** become increasingly concentrated with ions as they flow through the three electro dialysis stacks **102**, **104**, **106**. Similarly, the ion concentrations of desiccant streams **154**, **156** and **158** decrease, becoming increasingly dilute as cations **174**, **172** and **170** are removed from them. The depicted embodiment can be a single electrochemical cell, having a single cathode on one side (to the left in FIG. 1) and a single anode on the other side (to the right in FIG. 1). Alternatively, in the depicted embodiment each of the three electro dialysis stacks **102**, **104**, **106** can be its own electrochemical cell, having its own cathode and anode; in such an alternative embodiment, the arrangement of the cathodes and anodes will be the same as described above relative to FIG. 1, with the cathode to the left and anode to the right, allowing the depicted movement of cations **170**, **172**, **174**.

In this embodiment, the low concentration liquid desiccant **158** and high concentration liquid desiccant **150** are each the same halide salt solution. As shown in FIG. 1, the flow of the desiccant streams **150** and **158** overlap, or move through the disclosed system depicted in FIG. 1 in a continuous quasi-figure-8 pattern, with the low concentration desiccant stream **158** being processed to become the high concentration desiccant stream **150**, and vice versa. Because of that, both desiccant streams are made of the same solution, often a halide salt solution, with the difference between the two being the concentration of ions in the particular desiccant flow stream—the high concentration liquid desiccant **150** having a salt ion concentration of 35 wt %, and the low concentration liquid desiccant **158** having a salt ion concentration of 15 wt %, when both desiccants enter the heat and mass exchanger. The halide salt can be selected from sodium chloride (NaCl), potassium chloride (KCl), potassium iodide (KI), lithium chloride (LiCl), copper(II) chloride (CuCl₂), silver chloride (AgCl), calcium chloride (CaCl₂), chlorine fluoride (ClF), bromomethane (CH₃Br), iodoform (CHI₃), hydrogen chloride (HCl), lithium bromide (LiBr) hydrogen bromide (HBr), and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the halide salt solution is selected from LiCl and CaCl₂. In some embodiments, the halide salt solution is LiCl. The desiccant can also be potassium acetate or 1-Ethyl-3-methylimidazolium acetate (CAS number 143314-17-4).

In this embodiment, the water **176** removed from the inlet supply air **180** moves directly into the high concentration desiccant stream **150**. In contrast, water **178** is removed from the low concentration desiccant stream **158** into the exhaust or purge air stream **199**, which is then removed from the integrated system. As shown in FIG. 1, the flow of the desiccant streams **150** and **158** overlap, or operate in a quasi-figure-8 pattern, with the low concentration desiccant stream **158** being processed via electrolysis to become the high concentration desiccant stream **150**, and vice versa. By

bringing water **176** into the system of this embodiment via the high concentration desiccant stream **150**, the disclosed system reclaims water from the inlet supply air **180** for use in cooling and dehumidifying more inlet supply air **180** in subsequent operational cycles. Doing so allows the system of this embodiment to utilize less water from municipal sources, easing environmental impacts.

The embodiment depicted in FIG. 1 includes three electro dialysis stacks. One of skill in the art will recognize that the number of electro dialysis stacks can vary and that a sufficient number of electro dialysis stacks can be used in order to generate a low concentration liquid desiccant **158** and a high concentration liquid desiccant **150** with a desired cation concentration. More than one heat and mass exchanger can also be used. Also, while only two liquid desiccant streams are shown, the skilled artisan will recognize that there can also be multiple repeating pairs of channels with additional solution flows. The modifications to the system to accommodate fewer or more than three electro dialysis stacks, multiple solution flows in repeating pairs of channels, and more than one heat and mass exchanger would be known to one of skill in the art.

In a second embodiment, the present disclosure provides the system for dehumidifying air supplied to a space depicted in FIG. 2, and related methods of use. FIG. 2 depicts a single, integrated system comprising a heat and mass exchanger **200** and a single, multilayer electro dialysis stack **202**. The heat and mass exchanger **200** includes a first flow channel **290** through which a stream of inlet supply air **270**, a second flow channel **292** adjacent to the first flow channel **290** through which a stream of high concentration liquid desiccant **210** flows, a third flow channel **294** adjacent to the second flow channel **292** through which a stream of low concentration liquid desiccant **224** flows, and a fourth flow channel **296** adjacent to the third flow channel **294** through which a stream of exhaust air **282** flows. The first and second flow channels **290** and **292** are defined in part by a first vapor permeable membrane **274** that separates the first and second flow channels **290** and **292**, wherein humidity **272** (water vapor) flows from the stream of inlet supply air **270** into the high concentration liquid desiccant **210**, wherein the high concentration liquid desiccant **210** increases in volume with the addition of water from the inlet supply air **270**. Similarly, the third and fourth flow channels **294** and **296** are defined in part by a second vapor permeable membrane **278** that separates the third and fourth flow channels **294** and **296**. Humidity **280** (water vapor) flows from the low concentration liquid desiccant **224** into the exhaust air **282**. The low concentration liquid desiccant **224** decreases in volume as water is removed from it into the exhaust air **282**. The second and third flow channels are defined in part by a separation wall **276** that separates the second and third flow channels **292** and **294**, wherein the separation wall **276** is impermeable to the flow of water or water vapor, but made of a material capable of transferring heat **278** from the second flow channel **292** to the third flow channel **294**. The movement of heat **278** reduces the temperature of the inlet supply air **270** as it flows through the first flow channel **290**.

As shown in FIG. 2, the low concentration liquid desiccant **224** and the high concentration liquid desiccant **210** then move from the heat and mass exchanger **200** to the integrated, multilayer electro dialysis stack **202**. The electro dialysis stack **202** depicted in FIG. 2 includes seven flow channels. A first flow channel, which receives a stream of a first electrolyte solution **242**, is defined in part by an anode plate **250** and in part by a first cation exchange membrane

252. A second flow channel, adjacent to the first flow channel, is defined in part by the first cation exchange membrane 252 and in part by a first anion exchange membrane 254; this second flow channel receives a first portion 230 of the low concentration liquid desiccant 224 and outputs a first portion 236 of the high concentration liquid desiccant 210. A third flow channel, adjacent to the second flow channel, is defined in part by the first anion exchange membrane 254 and in part by a second cation exchange membrane 256; this third flow channel receives a first portion 216 of the high concentration liquid desiccant 210 and outputs a first portion 220 of the low concentration liquid desiccant 224. A fourth flow channel, adjacent to the third flow channel, is defined in part by the second cation exchange membrane 256 and in part by a second anion exchange membrane 258; this fourth flow channel receives a second portion 232 of the low concentration liquid desiccant 224 and outputs a second portion 238 of the high concentration liquid desiccant 210. A fifth flow channel, adjacent to the fourth flow channel, is defined in part by the second anion exchange membrane 258 and in part by a third cation exchange membrane 260; this fifth flow channel receives a second portion 218 of the high concentration liquid desiccant 210 and outputs a second portion 222 of the low concentration liquid desiccant 224. A sixth flow channel, adjacent to the fifth flow channel, is defined in part by the third cation exchange membrane 260 and in part by a third anion exchange membrane 262; this sixth flow channel receives a third portion 234 of the low concentration liquid desiccant 224 and outputs a third portion 240 of the high concentration liquid desiccant 210. A seventh flow channel, which receives a stream of a second electrolyte solution 244, is defined in part by the third anion exchange membrane 262 and in part by a cathode plate 264. Some embodiments include additional electro dialysis stacks similar to the electro dialysis stack described above.

As shown in FIG. 2, after leaving the heat and mass exchanger 200, the high concentration liquid desiccant 210 is moved to the electro dialysis stack 202, where it is split into two parts 216 and 218, which enter the third and fifth channels, respectively. Additionally, after leaving the heat and mass exchanger 200, the low concentration liquid desiccant 224 is moved to the electro dialysis stack 220, where it is split into three parts 230, 232 and 234, which enter the second, fourth, and sixth channels, respectively. Electro dialysis is then performed in the depicted channels, with cations moving away from cathode plate 264 toward anode plate 250, and anions moving away from anode plate 250 and toward cathode plate 264. As the liquid desiccants move through the channels, ions move across the ion permeable membranes 252, 254, 256, 258, 260 and 262 in the directions shown. The result of electro dialysis is that the concentration of ions in the liquid desiccant moving through the second, fourth and sixth channels increases; fractions 236, 238 and 240 are then pooled to become the high concentration liquid desiccant 224 that is recycled to the heat and mass exchanger 200. Concomitantly, the concentration of ions in the liquid desiccant moving through the third and fifth channels decreases; fractions 220 and 222 are then pooled to become the low concentration liquid desiccant 224 that is recycled to the heat and mass exchanger 200.

In this embodiment, the low concentration liquid desiccant 224, after leaving the heat and mass exchanger 200, is moved to the electro dialysis stack 202 where it is subjected to electro dialysis. The result of that electro dialysis is that the low concentration liquid desiccant 224 is then converted into the high concentration liquid desiccant 210 and moved back

to the heat and mass exchanger 200. Likewise, the high concentration liquid desiccant 210, after leaving the heat and mass exchanger 200, is moved to the electro dialysis stack 202 where it is subjected to electro dialysis. The result of that electro dialysis is that the high concentration liquid desiccant 210 is then converted into the low concentration liquid desiccant 224 and moved back to the heat and mass exchanger 200. The integration of the heat and mass exchanger 200 with the electro dialysis stack 202 allows for the two liquid desiccant streams to be exchanged for one another during the processing of the inlet supply air 270. This allows for repeated reuse of both desiccant streams, as volume and ionic content are moved back and forth between the liquid desiccant streams, while using less electricity. The end result is an integrated system that is more energy efficient than indirect evaporative cooling and dehumidification systems currently on the market.

Additionally, in this embodiment the low concentration liquid desiccant 224 and high concentration liquid desiccant 210 are each the same halide salt solution. As shown in FIG. 2, the flow of the desiccant streams 210 and 224 overlap, or move through the disclosed system depicted in FIG. 2 in a continuous quasi-figure-8 pattern, with the low concentration desiccant stream 224 being processed to become the high concentration desiccant stream 210, and vice versa. Because of that, both desiccant streams are made of the same solution, often a halide salt solution, with the difference between the two being the concentration of ions in the particular desiccant flow stream—the high concentration liquid desiccant 210 having a salt ion concentration of 35 wt %, and the low concentration liquid desiccant 224 having a salt ion concentration of 15 wt %, when both desiccants enter the heat and mass exchanger. The halide salt can be selected from sodium chloride (NaCl), potassium chloride (KCl), potassium iodide (KI), lithium chloride (LiCl), copper(II) chloride (CuCl₂), silver chloride (AgCl), calcium chloride (CaCl₂), chlorine fluoride (ClF), bromomethane (CH₃Br), iodoform (CHI₃), hydrogen chloride (HCl), lithium bromide (LiBr), hydrogen bromide (HBr), and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the halide salt solution is selected from LiCl and CaCl₂. In some embodiments, the halide salt solution is LiCl. The desiccant can also be potassium acetate or 1-Ethyl-3-methylimidazolium acetate (CAS number 143314-17-4).

In this embodiment, the water 272 removed from the inlet supply air 270 moves directly into the high concentration desiccant stream 210. In contrast, water 280 is removed from the low concentration desiccant stream 224 into the exhaust or purge air stream 282, which is then removed from the integrated system. As shown in FIG. 2, the flow of the desiccant streams 210 and 224 overlap, or operate in a quasi-figure-8 pattern, with the low concentration desiccant stream 224 being processed via electrolysis to become the high concentration desiccant stream 210, and vice versa. By bringing water 272 into the system of this embodiment via the high concentration desiccant stream 210, the disclosed system reclaims water from the inlet supply air 270 for use in cooling and dehumidifying more inlet supply air 270 in subsequent operational cycles. Doing so allows the system of this embodiment to utilize less water from municipal sources, easing environmental impacts.

In a third embodiment, with reference to FIG. 2, the present disclosure provides a method of cooling and dehumidifying inlet supply air 270, comprising:

in the heat and mass exchanger 200, moving humidified inlet supply air 270 through a first flow channel 290 and a

high concentration fluid desiccant **210** through a second flow channel **292** along opposite sides of a first vapor permeable membrane **274**;

in the heat and mass exchanger **200**, moving a low concentration fluid desiccant **224** through a third flow channel **294** and an exhaust air stream **282** through a fourth flow channel **296** along opposite sides of a second vapor permeable membrane **278**, wherein a vapor impermeable separation wall **276** separates the second **292** and third **294** flow channels;

outputting the inlet supply air **270** from the heat and mass exchanger **200**;

moving the high concentration fluid desiccant **210** and the low concentration fluid desiccant **224** out of the heat and mass exchanger **200** and into the electro dialysis stack **202**; and

recycling the high concentration fluid desiccant **210** and the low concentration fluid desiccant **224** for further use in the second flow channel **292** and third flow channel **294**, respectively;

wherein:

water vapor **272** moves from the humidified inlet supply air **270** across the first membrane **274** into the high concentration fluid desiccant **210**, dehumidifying the inlet supply air **270**;

heat **278** moves across the separation wall **276** from the high concentration fluid desiccant **210** into the low concentration fluid desiccant **224**, cooling the inlet supply air **270**;

water vapor **280** moves from the low concentration fluid desiccant **224** across the second water-permeable membrane **278** into the exhaust air stream **282**; and

in the electrolysis stack **202**, prior to recycling, the high concentration fluid desiccant **210** is processed to become the low concentration fluid desiccant **224** and the low concentration fluid desiccant **224** is processed to become the high concentration fluid desiccant **210**.

In this embodiment, in the electrolysis stack **202**, processing of the high concentration fluid desiccant **210** comprises:

splitting the high concentration fluid desiccant **210** stream into two streams of high concentration fluid desiccant **216** and **218**;

moving cations away from the two streams of high concentration fluid desiccant **216** and **218** across two cation permeable membranes **256** and **260** via electrolysis, and moving anions away from the two streams of high concentration fluid desiccant **216** and **218** across two anion permeable membranes **254** and **258**, creating two streams of low concentration fluid desiccant **220** and **224**; and

combining the two streams of low concentration fluid desiccant **220** and **224**, creating the low concentration fluid desiccant **224** stream.

In this embodiment, in the electrolysis stack **202**, processing of the low concentration fluid desiccant **224** comprises:

splitting the low concentration fluid desiccant **224** stream into three streams of low concentration fluid desiccant **230**, **232** and **234**;

moving cations into the three streams of low concentration fluid desiccant **230**, **232** and **234** across three cation permeable membranes **252**, **256** and **260** via electrolysis, and moving anions into the three streams of low concentration fluid desiccant **230**, **232** and **234** across three anion permeable membranes **254**, **258** and **262** via electrolysis, creating three streams of high concentration fluid desiccant **236**, **238** and **240**; and

combining the three streams of high concentration fluid desiccant **236**, **238** and **240**, creating the high concentration fluid desiccant **210** stream.

In this embodiment, in the electro dialysis stack **202** prior to recycling, the two streams of high concentration fluid desiccant **216** and **218** are intercalated between the three streams of low concentration fluid desiccant **230**, **232** and **234**, along opposite sides of a series of alternating cation and anion permeable membranes. In some embodiments, the order of the alternating cation and anion permeable membranes is cation permeable membrane **252**, anion permeable membrane **254**, cation permeable membrane **256**, anion permeable membrane **258**, cation permeable membrane **260** and anion permeable membrane **262**.

As shown in FIG. **2**, cations and anions move from the two streams of high concentration fluid desiccant **216** and **218**, across the ion-permeable membranes, into the three streams of low concentration fluid desiccant **230**, **232** and **234**, via electrolysis as described above. The concentration of ions in the two streams of high concentration fluid desiccant **216** and **218** become reduced and the concentration of ions in the three streams of low concentration fluid desiccant **230**, **232** and **234** increase. The result of the electro dialysis is that the high concentration liquid desiccant **210**, after leaving the second flow channel **292** is converted into the low concentration liquid desiccant **224** via electrolysis and moved back to the third flow channel **294**. The integration of the heat and mass exchanger **200** with the electro dialysis stack **202** allows for the two liquid desiccant streams to be exchanged for one another during the processing of the inlet supply air **270**. This allows for repeated reuse of both desiccant streams, as volume and ionic content are moved back and forth between the liquid desiccant streams, while using less electricity. The end result is an integrated system that is more energy efficient than indirect evaporative cooling and dehumidification systems currently on the market.

Additionally, in this embodiment the low concentration liquid desiccant **224** and high concentration liquid desiccant **210** are each the same halide salt solution. As shown in FIG. **2**, the flow of the desiccant streams **210** and **224** overlap, or move through the disclosed system depicted in FIG. **2** in a continuous quasi-figure-8 pattern, with the low concentration desiccant stream **224** being processed to become the high concentration desiccant stream **210**, and vice versa. Because of that, both desiccant streams are made of the same solution, often a halide salt solution, with the difference between the two being the concentration of ions in the particular desiccant flow stream—the high concentration liquid desiccant **210** having a salt ion concentration of 35 wt %, and the low concentration liquid desiccant **224** having a salt ion concentration of 15 wt %, when both desiccants enter the heat and mass exchanger. The halide salt can be selected from sodium chloride (NaCl), potassium chloride (KCl), potassium iodide (KI), lithium chloride (LiCl), copper(II) chloride (CuCl₂), silver chloride (AgCl), calcium chloride (CaCl₂), chlorine fluoride (ClF), bromomethane (CH₃Br), iodoform (CHI₃), hydrogen chloride (HCl), lithium bromide (LiBr), hydrogen bromide (HBr), and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the halide salt solution is selected from LiCl and CaCl₂. In some embodiments, the halide salt solution is LiCl. The desiccant can also be potassium acetate or 1-Ethyl-3-methylimidazolium acetate (CAS number 143314-17-4).

In this embodiment, the water **272** removed from the inlet supply air **270** moves directly into the high concentration desiccant stream **210**. In contrast, water **280** is removed

from the low concentration desiccant stream **224** into the exhaust or purge air stream **282**, which is then removed from the integrated system. As shown in FIG. 2, the flow of the desiccant streams **210** and **224** overlap, or operate in a quasi-figure-8 pattern, with the low concentration desiccant stream **224** being processed via electrolysis to become the high concentration desiccant stream **210**, and vice versa. By bringing water **272** into the system of this embodiment via the high concentration desiccant stream **210**, the disclosed system reclaims water from the inlet supply air **270** for use in cooling and dehumidifying more inlet supply air **270** in subsequent operational cycles. Doing so allows the system of this embodiment to utilize less water from municipal sources, easing environmental impacts.

In a fourth embodiment, the present disclosure provides yet another system for cooling and dehumidifying air as provided in FIG. 3. In this embodiment, a process air stream **300** is moved through a heat and mass exchanger along a first side of a vapor permeable membrane **304**. A high concentration liquid desiccant **320** is also moved through the heat and mass exchanger, along a second side of the vapor permeable membrane **304**. The process air stream **300** and the high concentration liquid desiccant **320** are separated by the first vapor permeable membrane **304**. Water vapor **302** flows across the first vapor permeable membrane **304** from the process air stream **300** into the high concentration liquid desiccant **320**. The high concentration liquid desiccant **320** is thereby diluted by water vapor **302** from the first process air stream **300**, where it is then moved from the heat and mass exchanger to an electrolysis stack. The result is that the process airstream is dehumidified.

A purge air stream **314** is received and flows through the heat and mass exchanger along a first side of a second water vapor permeable membrane **310**. A low concentration liquid desiccant **332** also flows through the heat and mass exchanger, along a second side of the second water vapor permeable membrane **310**. The coolant air stream **314** and the low concentration liquid desiccant **332** are separated by the second vapor permeable membrane **310**. Water vapor **312** flows across the second vapor permeable membrane **310** from the low concentration liquid desiccant **332** into the purge air stream **314**. The low concentration liquid desiccant **332** therefore becomes more concentrated by evaporation of water vapor **312** from the low concentration liquid desiccant **332** into the purge air stream, where it is then moved to an electro-dialysis stack.

In the heat and mass exchanger, the high concentration liquid desiccant **320** and the low concentration liquid desiccant **332** are separated by a water vapor impermeable barrier **306**. Heat **308** from the high concentration fluid desiccant **320** moves across the barrier **306** into the low concentration fluid desiccant **332**. The result is the cooling of the inlet air **300**.

At the electrolysis stack, the high concentration liquid desiccant **320** from the heat and mass exchanger is split into two high concentration streams, **324** and **326**, and flowed into separate channels of the electro-dialysis stack **344** and **352**. During electro-dialysis, the electro-dialysis stack removes ions from the high concentration streams **324** and **326**, producing streams **328** and **330**, which contain low concentrations of ions. Low concentration streams **328** and **330** are then combined to generate the low concentration liquid desiccant **332**, which is recycled back to the heat and mass exchanger.

Additionally, at the electrolysis stack the low concentration liquid desiccant **332** from the heat and mass exchanger is flowed into a single, central channel **348** of the electro-

dialysis stack that is located between channels **344** and **352**. During electrolysis, the electro-dialysis stack moves ions into the central channel **348**, generating the high concentration liquid desiccant **320**, which is recycled back to the heat and mass exchanger.

Ions move out of channels **344** and **352**, and into channel **348**, by passing across ion permeable membranes **342**, **346**, **350** and **354**. In electrolysis, ions will move in accordance with the electrical current imparted into the stack—with cations moving away from the cathode and toward the anode, anions moving away from the anode and toward the cathode. In the depicted embodiment, structure **340** can be either the cathode or the anode, depending upon the desired configuration of the electro-dialysis stack. Similarly, structure **356** can be either the cathode or the anode. As a person of skill in the art will know, when structure **340** is a cathode, structure **356** is an anode. Similarly, when structure **340** is an anode, structure **356** is a cathode. Additional electro-dialysis flow channels and membranes can be placed between the anode and cathode, and multiple electro-dialysis stacks can be arranged in series. For example, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, or more electro-dialysis stacks can be arranged in series.

In this embodiment, the low concentration liquid desiccant **332**, after leaving the heat and mass exchanger, is moved to the electro-dialysis stack where it is subjected to electro-dialysis. The result of that electro-dialysis is that the low concentration liquid desiccant **332** is then converted into the high concentration liquid desiccant **320** and moved back to the heat and mass exchanger. Likewise, the high concentration liquid desiccant **320**, after leaving the heat and mass exchanger, is moved to the electro-dialysis stack where it is subjected to electro-dialysis. The result of that electro-dialysis is that the high concentration liquid desiccant **320** is then converted into the low concentration liquid desiccant **332** and moved back to the heat and mass exchanger. The integration of the heat and mass exchanger with the electro-dialysis stack allows for the two liquid desiccant streams to be exchanged for one another during the processing of the inlet supply air **300**. This allows for repeated reuse of both desiccant streams, as volume and ionic content are moved back and forth between the liquid desiccant streams, while using less electricity. The end result is an integrated system that is more energy efficient than indirect evaporative cooling and dehumidification systems currently on the market.

Additionally, in this embodiment the low concentration liquid desiccant **332** and high concentration liquid desiccant **320** are each the same halide salt solution. As shown in FIG. 3, the flow of the desiccant streams **320** and **332** overlap, or move through the disclosed system depicted in FIG. 3 in a continuous quasi-figure-8 pattern, with the low concentration desiccant stream **332** being processed to become the high concentration desiccant stream **320**, and vice versa. Because of that, both desiccant streams are made of the same solution, often a halide salt solution, with the difference between the two being the concentration of ions in the particular desiccant flow stream—the high concentration liquid desiccant **320** having a salt ion concentration of 35 wt %, and the low concentration liquid desiccant **332** having a salt ion concentration of 15 wt %, when both desiccants enter the heat and mass exchanger. The halide salt can be selected from sodium chloride (NaCl), potassium chloride (KCl), potassium iodide (KI), lithium chloride (LiCl), copper(II) chloride (CuCl₂), silver chloride (AgCl), calcium chloride (CaCl₂), chlorine fluoride (ClF), bromomethane (CH₃Br), iodoform (CHI₃), hydrogen chloride (HCl), hydro-

gen bromide (HBr), lithium bromide (LiBr), and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the halide salt solution is selected from LiCl and CaCl₂. In some embodiments, the halide salt solution is LiCl. The desiccant can also be potassium acetate or 1-Ethyl-3-methylimidazolium acetate (CAS number 143314-17-4).

In this embodiment, the water **302** removed from the inlet supply air **300** moves directly into the high concentration desiccant stream **320**. In contrast, water **312** is removed from the low concentration desiccant stream **332** into the exhaust or purge air stream **314**, which is then removed from the integrated system. As shown in FIG. 3, the flow of the desiccant streams **320** and **332** overlap, or operate in a quasi-figure-8 pattern, with the low concentration desiccant stream **332** being processed via electrolysis to become the high concentration desiccant stream **320**, and vice versa. By bringing water **302** into the system of this embodiment via the high concentration desiccant stream **320**, the disclosed system reclaims water from the inlet supply air **300** for use in cooling and dehumidifying more inlet supply air **300** in subsequent operational cycles. Doing so allows the system of this embodiment to utilize less water from municipal sources, easing environmental impacts.

FIGS. 4 and 5 depict a fifth embodiment of a dehumidification system provided by the present disclosure, illustrating yet other examples of water absorption (occurring in a heat and mass exchanger) and ion separation (occurring in an electro dialysis stack). In this embodiment, the processes depicted in FIG. 4 can occur apart from the processes depicted in FIG. 5. Such processes may be split between distinct structures within a closed, integrated system. The depicted embodiments of FIGS. 4 and 5 do not occur in a continuous loop with each other, though they could be adjusted for such operation. Rather, the depicted embodiments of FIGS. 4 and 5 are performed in two complimentary but distinct loops.

In the portion of this embodiment provided in FIG. 4, the process of water absorption involves the movement of humidity **402**, in the form of water vapor, from process air **400**, across a vapor permeable membrane **404**, to a liquid desiccant **420** and heat **408** from the liquid desiccant **420** moves across a water vapor impermeable barrier **406**, to a coolant side (such as that depicted, for example, in FIG. 5).

Process air **400** flows along one side of a vapor permeable membrane **404** that separates the air from a desiccant stream **420** flowing on the other side of the membrane **404**. In some embodiments, the desiccant stream **420** contains a high concentration of salt ions, making it a high concentration desiccant stream **420**. Humidity (water vapor) **402** flows across the membrane **404** from the process air **400** to the high concentration desiccant stream **420**. On the opposite side of the flow channel containing the high concentration liquid desiccant **420** is a barrier **406** that is impermeable to water vapor, but that will allow for the free transfer of energy in the form of heat. In the depicted embodiment, heat **408** flows across the barrier **406** from the high concentration desiccant stream **420** to a coolant side. Once the water **402** is moved from the process air **400** into the high concentration liquid desiccant **420**, the desiccant **420** is moved from the heat and mass exchanger to the electro dialysis stack.

In this embodiment, water **402** is removed from the inlet supply air **400** and moved into the high concentration desiccant stream **420**. The disclosed system is therefore capable of claiming water directly from the inlet supply air **400** for use in cooling and dehumidifying more inlet supply air **400** in subsequent operational cycles. Doing so allows

the system of this embodiment to utilize less water from municipal sources, easing environmental impacts.

At the electro dialysis stack, the high concentration desiccant stream **420** is split into high concentration streams **424** and **426** that flow into channels **444** and **452**. A flow of a fluid desiccant containing a low concentration of salt ions **434** is brought from another location (not shown) and moved into central channel **448**, located between channels **444** and **452**. During electrolysis, the electro dialysis stack moves ions into the central channel **448**, generating the high concentration liquid desiccant **420**, which is recycled back to the heat and mass exchanger.

Ions move out of channels **444** and **452**, and into channel **448**, by passing across ion permeable membranes **442**, **446**, **450** and **454**, in the directions depicted by the curved arrows. In electrolysis, ions will move in accordance with the electrical current imparted into the stack—with cations moving away from the cathode and toward the anode, anions moving away from the anode and toward the cathode. In the depicted embodiment, structure **440** can be either the cathode or the anode, depending upon the desired configuration of the electro dialysis stack. Similarly, structure **456** can be either the cathode or the anode. As a person of skill in the art will know, when structure **440** is a cathode, structure **456** is an anode. Similarly, when structure **440** is an anode, structure **456** is a cathode. Additional electro dialysis flow channels and membranes can be placed between the anode and cathode, and multiple electro dialysis stacks can be arranged in series. For example, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, or more electro dialysis stacks can be arranged in series.

In this embodiment, the fluid desiccant containing a low concentration of salt ions **434** becomes highly concentrated with salt ions as a result of electro dialysis, becoming the high concentration liquid desiccant **420** that is moved back to the heat and mass exchanger for subsequent processing cycles.

High concentration streams **424** and **426** lose salt ions during electrolysis, becoming low concentration streams **428** and **430**, which are combined into a low concentration fluid desiccant **432** that is moved to another part of the system for use as a low concentration liquid desiccant in another portion of the integrated system.

Additionally, in this embodiment the fluid desiccant containing a low concentration of salt ions **434** and the high concentration liquid desiccant **420** are each the same halide salt solution. The system depicted in FIG. 4 represents a portion of a closed system whereby the fluid desiccant containing a low concentration of salt ions **434** is processed to become the high concentration desiccant stream **420**. To ensure consistent operability, the salt solutions must be the same solution, often a halide salt solution, with the difference between the two being the concentration of ions in the particular desiccant flow stream—the high concentration liquid desiccant **420** having a salt ion concentration of 35 wt %, and the low concentration liquid desiccant **432** having a salt ion concentration of 15 wt %, when both desiccants enter a heat and mass exchanger. The halide salt can be selected from sodium chloride (NaCl), potassium chloride (KCl), potassium iodide (KI), lithium chloride (LiCl), copper(II) chloride (CuCl₂), silver chloride (AgCl), calcium chloride (CaCl₂), chlorine fluoride (ClF), bromomethane (CH₃Br), iodoform (CHI₃), hydrogen chloride (HCl), lithium bromide (LiBr), hydrogen bromide (HBr), and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the halide salt solution is selected from LiCl and CaCl₂. In some embodi-

ments, the halide salt solution is LiCl. The desiccant can also be potassium acetate or 1-Ethyl-3-methylimidazolium acetate (CAS number 143314-17-4).

In the portion of this embodiment provided in FIG. 5, the process of water cooling involves the movement of heat **500**, across a water vapor impermeable barrier **502**, into a liquid desiccant **520**. Water vapor **506** from the liquid desiccant **520** moves across a vapor permeable membrane **504**, to a flow of purge or coolant air **508**. The heat **500** can come from a water absorption process, such as that depicted in FIG. 4.

In some embodiments, the desiccant stream **520** contains a low concentration of salt ions, making it a low concentration desiccant stream **520**. The low concentration fluid desiccant **520** flows along one side of the vapor permeable membrane **504** that separates the desiccant stream **520** from a flow of purge or coolant air **508** flowing on the other side of the membrane **504**. Humidity (water vapor) **506** flows across the membrane **504** from the low concentration fluid desiccant **520** to the purge or coolant air **508**. On the opposite side of the flow channel containing the low concentration liquid desiccant **520** is a barrier **502** that is impermeable to water vapor, but that will allow for the free transfer of energy in the form of heat. In the depicted embodiment, heat **500** flows across the barrier **502** from a water absorption side into the low concentration desiccant stream **520**. Once the water **402** is moved from the low concentration liquid desiccant **520**, the desiccant **520** is moved from the heat and mass exchanger to the electrodi-

alysis stack. At the electrodiagnosis stack, a first flow of fluid desiccant containing a high concentration of salt ions **526** is brought from another location (not shown) and split into high concentration streams **528** and **530** that flow into channels **544** and **552**. The low concentration fluid desiccant **520** coming from the heat and mass exchanger is moved into central channel **548**, located between channels **544** and **552**. During electrolysis, the electrodiagnosis stack moves ions into the central channel **548**, generating a second flow of fluid desiccant containing a high concentration of salt ions **524**, which is moved to another portion of the closed, integrated system.

During electrolysis, high concentration streams **528** and **530** lose salt ions, becoming low concentration streams **532** and **534**. Those streams are combined to form the low concentration fluid desiccant **520**, that is then recycled to the heat and mass exchanger for further processing rounds.

Ions move out of channels **544** and **552**, and into channel **548**, by passing across ion permeable membranes **542**, **546**, **550** and **554**, in the directions depicted by the curved arrows. In electrolysis, ions will move in accordance with the electrical current imparted into the stack—with cations moving away from the cathode and toward the anode, anions moving away from the anode and toward the cathode. In the depicted embodiment, structure **540** can be either the cathode or the anode, depending upon the desired configuration of the electrodiagnosis stack. Similarly, structure **556** can be either the cathode or the anode. As a person of skill in the art will know, when structure **540** is a cathode, structure **556** is an anode. Similarly, when structure **540** is an anode, structure **556** is a cathode. Additional electrodiagnosis flow channels and membranes can be placed between the anode and cathode, and multiple electrodiagnosis stacks can be arranged in series. For example, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, or more electrodiagnosis stacks can be arranged in series.

Additionally, in this embodiment the fluid desiccant containing a high concentration of salt ions **526** and the low concentration liquid desiccant **520** each contain the same halide salt solution. To ensure consistent operability, the salt solutions must be the same solution, often a halide salt solution, with the difference between the two being the concentration of ions in the particular desiccant flow stream—the high concentration liquid desiccant **524** having a salt ion concentration of 35 wt %, and the low concentration liquid desiccant **520** having a salt ion concentration of 15 wt %, when both desiccants enter a heat and mass exchanger. The halide salt can be selected from sodium chloride (NaCl), potassium chloride (KCl), potassium iodide (KI), lithium chloride (LiCl), copper(II) chloride (CuCl₂), silver chloride (AgCl), calcium chloride (CaCl₂), chlorine fluoride (ClF), bromomethane (CH₃Br), iodoform (CHI₃), hydrogen chloride (HCl), lithium bromide (LiBr), hydrogen bromide (HBr), and combinations thereof. In some embodiments, the halide salt solution is selected from LiCl and CaCl₂. In some embodiments, the halide salt solution is LiCl. The desiccant can also be potassium acetate or 1-Ethyl-3-methylimidazolium acetate (CAS number 143314-17-4).

EXPERIMENTAL EXAMPLES

Experimental Example 1

FIG. 6 depicts a heat and mass exchanger consistent with embodiments provided by the present disclosure. FIG. 6 shows, on the left hand side of the “plate,” how water vapor can diffuse through a membrane and be absorbed into a concentrated salt solution desiccant stream. On the right hand side of the “plate,” water is evaporated from the diluted salt solution desiccant stream through a membrane into a separate airstream. The salt solution with the lower concentration (right hand side of the “plate”) has a higher vapor pressure, and therefore can evaporate water into the coolant air stream while water vapor is removed from the process air stream and absorbed into the high-concentration salt solution. The absorption and evaporation occur simultaneously and setup a strong driving force for heat transfer from the high-concentration solution to the low-concentration solution. As provided herein, a heat and mass exchanger such as that depicted in FIG. 6 can serve as a part of an integrated system, that also includes one or more electrolysis stacks for electrochemical regeneration using ion transfer to concentrate the desiccant, wherein the mass and heat exchanger provides a 4-fluid absorber to reject water from the diluted desiccant stream. The four fluids being a process air stream, a high concentration salt solution fluid desiccant, a low concentration salt solution fluid desiccant, and a purge or coolant air stream.

Experimental Example 2

Electrodiagnosis or other ion-separation technologies are a promising regeneration method, where salt ions and water molecules are separated without energy intensive liquid/vapor phase change. The process removes ions from an already-dilute desiccant stream and transports the ions, across ion exchange membranes, to further concentrate a strong desiccant stream. Both streams can be stored for later use. Electrodiagnosis is common for desalination and wastewater treatment, but not for high-concentration desiccants useful in the systems and methods provided by the present disclosure. Existing research has looked solely at energy to

drive moisture from one concentration to another, but not how to integrate electro dialysis into a liquid-desiccant cycle.

Electrochemical regeneration as it was known to occur prior to the filing of the instant application is shown in FIG. 7, where positive and negative ions move across a cation and anion membrane to create concentrated and diluted liquid streams. However, to discharge the diluted stream from prior art electrochemical regeneration methods requires very low concentration desiccants, such that they can be disposed of down the drain (nearly pure water), like condensate is for standard vapor compression air conditioners. However, the performance of electro dialysis and other electrochemical processes degrade when working over large concentration gradients, particularly when the diluted stream is at very low concentrations. This is needed for desiccant regeneration, which produces 35% (by wt.) liquid desiccant.

In contrast, the approach disclosed herein generates a low-concentration desiccant stream (~15% by wt.), rather than pure water. The water is removed by directing the low-concentration solution to the cooling side of a 4-fluid dehumidifier (shown in FIG. 6), where it evaporates and cools the concentrated desiccant stream, removing the heat of absorption from the desiccant. Electro dialysis has not been explored previously between high (~35% by wt.) and moderate (~15% by wt.) concentration fluid desiccants; the present disclosure provides systems utilizing fluid desiccant streams having these concentrations. As set forth above, this can be achieved using multi-stage electrochemical deionization systems, which lower the concentration gradients across the membrane by distributing this gradient across several ion transport stages.

A model of the absorber was created, showing how the difference in concentration can be lowered for this process. The results of the modeling are shown in FIG. 8. Depending on the ambient humidity, the concentration difference can be very small, drastically increasing efficiency. Even at high ambient air humidity, the diluted stream is still far from pure water (which would be required for discharge down the drain), and allows for a more efficient electrochemical process, with much fewer stages.

To predict the required concentration of the desiccant streams, a model of the four fluids shown in FIG. 2 was built: two airstreams and two desiccants streams. The two air channels are approximately 3 mm wide, and the desiccant channels are approximately 0.5 mm wide. A 20-micron porous membrane is used between the desiccant and air. The model assumes a crossflow geometry with the following flow directions:

- High-concentration desiccant—vertical downward
- Low-concentration desiccant—vertical downward
- Process air stream—horizontal
- Coolant air stream—vertical downward

The model is a finite-difference model that calculates the heat and mass transfer between the four fluids at each node within the device. There are 15 nodes in the horizontal direction, and 8 nodes in the vertical direction. Heat and mass transfer coefficients are calculated for each fluid based on correlations from the literature, including for water vapor diffusion across the membrane. Membranes can be included on both liquid desiccant streams, neither, or some combination.

To The heat and mass transfer flows between the different streams is shown in FIG. 9, along with the temperature, humidity, and concentration profiles. The low vapor pressure of the desiccant on the process side sets up a humidity driving potential from the air to the desiccant. The absorption of the water vapor into the desiccant releases the

enthalpy of vaporization, heating the desiccant. The heat in that desiccant is then transferred to the process airstream and across the plate into the low-concentration liquid desiccant. Water vapor is evaporating from this second desiccant stream, which absorbs heat. This cools the coolant airstream and also the high-concentration desiccant across the plate. Concentration polarization within the desiccant film is also calculated using an estimate for the mass transfer coefficient for water molecules to diffuse inside the desiccant film.

The model calculates the outlet temperature and the outlet concentration or humidity using an iterative solver in the Engineering Equation Solver program. The model has the following independent variables:

- flow rate of liquid desiccant (4 L/min)
- desiccant inlet temperature (30 C)
- Return air temperature (27 C)
- Return air inlet humidity ratio (11.1 g/kg)
- Process and coolant side airflow rates (3400 m³/hr)
- Inlet coolant air temperature (35 C)
- Inlet coolant air humidity ratio (ranging from 10 g/kg to 20 g/kg)

Note: the process side inlet temperature and humidity is calculated assuming 30% ventilation air (30% outdoor air (which matches the coolant air) and 70% return air).

The outlet humidity ratio is specified in the model (8 g/kg), and then it is run for different inlet humidity ratios. The model solves for the required concentrations on the strong and weak side to deliver the required outlet humidity ratio, and so that the water evaporation rate on the coolant airstream matches the water vapor absorption rate on the process side. This ensures a mass balance on the water coming into and going out of the system.

The modeling results are shown in FIG. 8. This shows how the concentration is much higher than that required for disposing of the diluted stream down the drain (mass fraction <0.0002). The higher the mass fraction of the diluted stream, the less energy the electro dialysis regenerator will use.

Experimental Example 3

FIG. 1 shows how three electro dialysis stacks integrate with a heat and mass exchanger so that desiccant flows in a continuous stream. As shown at the top of FIG. 1, the high concentration liquid desiccant **150** is at the most concentrated state when it is entering the second flow channel **196**, where the concentrations mass of salt per mass of solution is about 35% salt concentration by weight. The process continues as follows:

On the process side/left side of plate **182**, the high concentration fluid desiccant **150** absorbs water from the process air **180**, dropping in concentration from 35% salt concentration by weight to 30% salt concentration by weight when it leaves the second flow channel **196**.

In electro dialysis stack **106**, the high concentration fluid desiccant **150**, as it moves through the fifth electro dialysis flow channel **194**, gives up ions **174** across membrane **175**, further dropping in salt concentration from 30% salt by weight (as it enters channel **194**) to 25% salt by weight as it leaves channel **194**, leaving as a first stream of intermediate low concentration liquid desiccant **154**; and

In contrast, second intermediate high concentration liquid desiccant stream **164**, moving in the sixth electro dialysis flow channel **195** increases in salt concentration from 30% when it enters the channel **195** to 35% when

25

it exits flow channel **195** as the now recycled high concentration liquid fluid desiccant stream **150**.

In electro dialysis stack **104**, the intermediate/low concentration fluid desiccant **154**, as it moves through the third electro dialysis flow chamber **192**, gives up ions **172** across membrane **173**, further dropping in salt concentration from 25% salt by weight (as it enters channel **192**) to 20% salt by weight as it leaves channel **192**, leaving as a second stream of intermediate low concentration liquid desiccant **156**; and

In contrast, first intermediate high concentration liquid desiccant stream **162**, moving in the fourth electro dialysis flow channel **193** increases in salt concentration from 25% when it enters the channel **193** to 30% when it exits flow channel **193** as the second intermediate high concentration liquid desiccant **164**.

In electro dialysis stack **102**, the second stream of intermediate low concentration liquid desiccant **156**, as it moves through flow chamber **190**, gives up ions **170** across membrane **171**, further dropping in salt concentration from 20% salt by weight (as it enters channel **190**) to 15% salt by weight as it leaves channel **190**, leaving as the now recycled low concentration fluid desiccant stream **158**; and

In contrast, the low concentration fluid desiccant stream **158** that left the third flow channel **1104** of the heat and mass exchanger **100** and is now moving through the second electro dialysis flow channel **191** increases in salt concentration from 20% when it enters flow channel **191** to 25% when it exits flow channel **191** as first intermediate high concentration liquid desiccant stream **162**.

The recycled low concentration fluid desiccant **158** is moved back to the heat and mass exchanger **100**, where it enters the third flow channel **1104**. Water evaporates from the desiccant **158** into a coolant or exhaust airstream **199**, which is then exhausted outside, concentrating the fluid desiccant **158** from 15% to 20% salt concentration by weight. This step also removes water from the system that was absorbed by the high concentration desiccant **150** in flow channel **196** of the heat and mass exchanger.

From the mass and heat exchanger **100**, the low concentration fluid desiccant **158** enters electro dialysis stack **102** and is progressively concentrated as it progresses through the three electro dialysis stacks **102**, **104** and **106** until it becomes the high concentration liquid desiccant **150**.

The process can be modified to lower the concentration of the low concentration desiccant **158** to below 15% by adding more electro dialysis stacks.

Desiccant storage tanks can also be added at stream **150** (highest concentration) and stream **158** (lowest concentration). This allows the system to use electricity at times separate from the cooling demand and to store the two desiccant concentrations for later use. It also allows for changes in the average water content of the desiccant, such that the system volume can increase and decrease as the concentration changes.

The configuration in FIG. **1** reduces the concentration change across each electro dialysis stack. In the depicted embodiment, a 5% concentration change for the two streams

26

is shown, with both streams entering at the same concentration. The maximum delta concentration across each electro dialysis stack is then only 5%, while the total change in concentration is 20% (35% to 15%). The change could also be reduced by expanding the number of electro dialysis stacks with the same total concentration change (e.g., 6 ED stacks over 20% would have a delta concentration of only 2.5% per ED stack).

Without the integration of the low concentration liquid desiccant stream **158** in channel **1104** into the heat and mass exchanger, which removes water from the desiccant stream **158** without added energy, an electro dialysis-based system using a liquid desiccant would need to dispose of the desiccant down the drain. This requires a very low concentration such that the salt ions do not contaminate the wastewater stream and is not depleted by removing ions from the system. Drinking water thresholds are ~0.2 parts per thousand, which also corresponds to about 1-2 kg of salt dumped into the wastewater stream per year, or about 6% of the total salt ions of the system lost per year. As such, the disclosed embodiments significantly advance the state of the art.

Experimental Example 4

To understand the energy impact of the disclosed integrated systems, it is useful to estimate the energy required to regenerate the desiccant from 30% mass fraction back to 35% mass fraction after absorbing water from the airstream. This was done using the calculations described below, with the results shown in FIG. **10**.

The total power, in kW, is shown in FIG. **10** for a 1 L/min desiccant flow. Operating the disclosed systems uses between 0.5 and 1.5 kW, depending on the minimum concentration, whereas reducing the desiccant concentration to 0.2 parts per thousand, as required by the prior art systems, requires 4 kW. Thus, the disclosed systems use only 12-38% of the energy as a set of electro dialysis stacks alone.

In addition to the electricity savings, the disclosed systems improve the performance of the electro dialysis process for concentrating desiccant by:

- Eliminating the disposal of LiCl (or other desiccant) ions into the municipal wastewater stream;
- Eliminating loss of this desiccant from the system, which would need to be replaced;
- Reducing the capital cost of the electro dialysis stacks by reducing the number of electro dialysis stacks required; and
- Providing cooling to the dehumidified airstream inherently in the process, through evaporation, which minimizes the cooling required to maintain desired outlet temperatures from the disclosed systems.

Energy Consumption Calculation:

The total energy consumption of the electro dialysis components of the manifold shown above is calculated by determining the power required for each unit, then summing these values. In each electro dialysis stack, a current of:

$$i_{ideal} = \frac{QF}{NA}(c_{out} - c_{in})$$

must be applied, where Q is the volumetric flow rate, F is Faraday's Constant, N is the number of CEM/AEM pairs in the stack, A is the cross-sectional surface area, and

$$c_{in} = \frac{\omega_{LiCl}^{in} \rho_{H_2O}}{M_{LiCl}}$$

$$c_{out} = \frac{\omega_{LiCl}^{out} \rho_{H_2O}}{M_{LiCl}}$$

are the inlet and (desired) outlet salt concentrations.

Assuming that most of the voltage drop arises due to ohmic losses (i.e., neglecting all junction potentials), the voltage input required can be found as:

$$\sum_k \Delta V_{ohm,k} = \sum_k IR_k = \sum_k i \frac{L_k}{\sigma_k}$$

The conductivity of each layer will change as a function of the salt stream concentrations, with lower concentrations leading to lower conductivities. Note that these results use dilute solution theory, which neglects ion-ion interactions, which could be considered when calculating the ohmic losses. Concentrated solution theory would predict a slight benefit of reducing the salt concentrations, as ion-ion "friction" would be reduced. However, this effect should be small compared to the concentration effect.

The ionic conductivity is a function of the local salt concentration and the species' diffusion coefficients:

$$\sigma_k = \sum_k \frac{F^2}{RT} (z_k^2) D_k c_k$$

If we assume local electroneutrality in the rinses, the total ionic conductivity becomes:

$$\sigma_{tot} = \frac{F^2 c}{RT} (D_{Li^+} + D_{Cl^-})$$

where c refers to the bulk rinse concentration, i.e., it can refer to c_{in} or c_{out} .

Plugging in the conductivities to the voltage expression allows us to calculate the different potential drops required by each electro dialysis stack (A, B, and C in Table 1, below). Assuming N=20 for each stack, separation distances of 1 mm, and using a constant flow rate Q=1 L/min and area A=25 cm², the potentials required by each unit are:

TABLE 1

Stack ID	ΔV (V)	P (kW)
A	1.34	0.127
B	1.58	0.150
C	1.94	0.184

Thus, the total power required will be 0.461 kW for the example shown in the data of Table 1 ($\omega_{max}=0.35$, $\omega_{min}=0.15$). The units with more dilute streams require a higher applied voltage due to the lower conductivities. Assuming different number of modules can be used to

calculate the power for different minimum concentrations, which provides the curve in FIG. 9.

Stated Examples

5

The following stated examples refer to embodiments of the systems and methods provided by the present disclosure:

Example 1. A dehumidification system, comprising:

a heat and mass exchanger;

10 at least one electro dialysis stack;

a high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant; and

a low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant;

wherein:

the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant are in a single, continuous stream that connects the heat and mass exchanger and the at least one electro dialysis stack;

the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant absorbs water from a process air stream in the heat and mass exchanger and rejects salt ions to the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in the at least one electro dialysis stack; and

the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant desorbs water from a purge air stream in the heat and mass exchanger and accepts ions from the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in the at least one electro dialysis stack.

Example 2. The dehumidification system of Example 1, wherein the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant comprise the same salt solution.

Example 3. The dehumidification system of Example 1 or Example 2, wherein the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant comprise a salt solution selected from sodium chloride, potassium chloride, potassium iodide, lithium chloride, copper(II) chloride, silver chloride, calcium chloride, chlorine fluoride, bromomethane, iodoform, hydrogen chloride, lithium bromide, hydrogen bromide, potassium acetate, 1-Ethyl-3-methylimidazolium acetate, and combinations thereof.

Example 4. The dehumidification system of Example 2 or Example 3, wherein the salt solution is selected from lithium chloride and calcium chloride.

Example 5. The dehumidification system of any one of Examples 2-4, wherein the salt solution is lithium chloride.

Example 6. The dehumidification system of any one of Examples 1-5, wherein, upon entry into the heat and mass exchanger, the difference in salt ion concentration between the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant is 20% by weight (wt %).

Example 7. The dehumidification system of any one of Examples 1-6, wherein, upon entry into the at least one electro dialysis stack, the difference in salt ion concentration between the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant is 10 wt %.

Example 8. The dehumidification system of any one of Examples 1-7, wherein, upon entry into the heat and mass exchanger, the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant has a salt ion concentration of 35 wt %.

Example 9. The dehumidification system of any one of Examples 1-8, wherein, upon entry into the heat and mass exchanger, the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant has a salt ion concentration of 15 wt %.

Example 10. The dehumidification system of any one of Examples 1-9, wherein, in the at least one electro dialysis stack, the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant is

converted into the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant, and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant is converted into the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant.

Example 11. The dehumidification system of any one of Examples 1-10, wherein the system comprises two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen or twenty electro dialysis stacks arranged in series between a cathode and an anode.

Example 12. A method of dehumidifying air, comprising:

absorbing water from a process air stream into a high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in a heat and mass exchanger, dehumidifying the process air stream;

desorbing water from a low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant into a purge air stream in the heat and mass exchanger;

moving the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant to at least one electro dialysis stack;

rejecting salt ions from the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant to the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in the at least one electro dialysis stack, converting the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant into the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant; and

accepting ions from the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant into the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in the at least one electro dialysis stack, converting the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant into the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant;

wherein:

the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant flow in a single, continuous stream that connects the heat and mass exchanger and the at least one electro dialysis stack; and

the converted high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the converted low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant are moved to the mass and heat exchanger.

Example 13. The method of Example 12, further comprising purging heat from the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant into the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in the heat and mass exchanger, cooling the dehumidified process air stream.

Example 14. The method of Example 12 or Example 13, wherein the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant comprise the same salt solution selected from sodium chloride, potassium chloride, potassium iodide, lithium chloride, copper(II) chloride, silver chloride, calcium chloride, chlorine fluoride, bromomethane, iodoform, hydrogen chloride, lithium bromide, hydrogen bromide, potassium acetate, 1-Ethyl-3-methylimidazolium acetate, and combinations thereof.

Example 15. The method of Example 14, wherein the salt solution is selected from lithium chloride and calcium chloride.

Example 16. The method of Example 14 or Example 15, wherein the salt solution is lithium chloride.

Example 17. The method of any one of Examples 12-16, wherein, when absorbing water from a process air stream into a high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and desorbing water from a low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant, the difference in salt ion concentration between the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant is 20% by weight (wt %).

Example 18. The method of any one of Examples 12-16, wherein:

when initiating the rejection of salt ions from the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant to the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in the at least one electro dialysis stack, and

when initiating the acceptance of ions from the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant into the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant in the at least one electro dialysis stack, the difference in salt ion concentration between the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant and the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant is 10 wt %.

Example 19. The method of any one of Examples 12-18, wherein, when absorbing water from the process air stream, the high salt ion concentration liquid desiccant has a salt ion concentration of 35 wt %.

Example 20. The method of any one of Examples 12-19, wherein, when desorbing water into the purge air stream, the low salt ion concentration liquid desiccant has a salt ion concentration of 15 wt %.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of dehumidifying air, comprising:

absorbing water from a process air stream into a first liquid desiccant, dehumidifying the process air stream; desorbing water from a second liquid desiccant into a purge air stream;

following the absorbing step, converting the first liquid desiccant into the second liquid desiccant by diluting the first liquid desiccant using the second liquid desiccant; and

following the desorbing step, converting the second liquid desiccant into the first liquid desiccant by concentrating the second liquid desiccant using the first liquid desiccant;

repeating the process, wherein:

the converted first liquid desiccant is utilized for the desorbing step and the converted second liquid desiccant is utilized for the absorbing step.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

purging heat from the first liquid desiccant into the second liquid desiccant, thus cooling the dehumidified process air stream.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein:

the first liquid desiccant and the second liquid desiccant comprise the same salt solution selected from sodium chloride, potassium chloride, potassium iodide, lithium chloride, copper(II) chloride, silver chloride, chlorine fluoride, bromomethane, iodoform, hydrogen chloride, lithium bromide, hydrogen bromide, potassium acetate, 1-ethyl-3-methylimidazolium acetate, and combinations thereof.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the salt solution is selected from lithium chloride and calcium chloride.

5. The method of claim 3, wherein the salt solution is lithium chloride.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein:

when absorbing water from the process air stream into the first liquid desiccant and desorbing water from the second liquid desiccant, the difference in a salt ion concentration between the first liquid desiccant and the second liquid desiccant is less than about 20% by weight (wt %).

7. The method of claim 1, wherein:

when initiating a rejection of salt ions from the first liquid desiccant to the second liquid desiccant and when initiating an acceptance of salt ions from the first liquid desiccant into the second liquid desiccant the difference

in a salt ion concentration between the first liquid desiccant and the second liquid desiccant is about 10 wt %.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein:

when absorbing water from the process air stream, the first liquid desiccant has a salt ion concentration of about 20 wt % to about 45 wt %.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein:

when desorbing water into the purge air stream, the second liquid desiccant has a salt ion concentration of about 3 wt % to about 30 wt %.

* * * * *